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CONTACT THE PUBLICATION
Contributing photos, articles, stories and research pertaining to wild sheep or the interests of members of the Idaho WSF are always welcome. Contributed material will be published at the committees discretion.

All membership dues include a subscription.

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MISSION
The mission of Idaho Wild Sheep is to enhance wild sheep populations in Idaho, and with partners in adjacent states, for public enjoyment, education, and fair chase hunting; to promote professional wildlife management, and protect sportsmen’s rights.

HISTORY
The Idaho Wild Sheep was founded in 1982 by two dozen concerned sportsmen who wanted to “put more bighorns on Idaho’s mountains.” From that core group, many of which are still very active on our board and committees, we have grown to a thriving organization with over 800 committed members.

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OUTREACH
WEST: Michael Keady, Chuck Middleton
EAST: Brian Kramer, Jim Warner, Jon Rampton, Josh Miller, Colten Gilbert
NORTH: Mike Schlegel, Rich Carignan
Campsites are magic. For time immortal hunters and conservationists have dreamed, discussed, and planned around campfires. Whether it’s the next day’s stalk of a bighorn ram or the establishment of the National Park Service, campfires allow us to stare at the stars and to think big, to consider our passions, and to forge our convictions.

Forty years ago, a group of passionate conservationists gathered to bear the burden of Idaho’s bighorn sheep management by creating the Idaho Chapter of the Foundation of North American Wild Sheep, which would become the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation.

Today your ID WSF is excited to be in the thick of large landscape bighorn sheep management. As you’ll read in this issue IDFG has seven bighorn sheep projects planned and approved for this fiscal year throughout Idaho.

This is thinking big! The successful Movi Test & Remove management is being expanded; cause specific mortality; primarily predation is being explored. Areas with little baseline bighorn sheep information are being studied to ascertain habitat utilization, travel routes and areas of potential contact with domestic sheep.

In November of 2022 ID WSF volunteers helped IDFG prepare radio telemetry collars and helped biologist capture bighorn sheep along the Salmon River Road near Shoup. The later was like a drive-by shooting, darting bighorns from a truck. Our volunteers were also flown into the Frank Church wilderness with IDFG biologist to conduct ground surveys of bighorn sheep. Unfortunately, a jetboat based capture was canceled due to the Salmon River icing up. Many more bighorn projects are planned for this winter of 2022/23. Between December and March there will be several sheep captures. Spring will see lamb surveys and late summer there will be ground lamb survival surveys.

A big shoutout goes to the IDFG for making a concerted effort to include ID WSF volunteers in many of the different aspects of bighorn sheep management. The IDFG/ID WSF teamwork has allowed both groups to increase their ability to get things done!

ID WSF has been raising funds to do all this work. We applied for two of the Nat’l Wild Sheep Foundation Grant-In-Aid (GIA) grants to support multi-state bighorn sheep projects. Both grants were awarded for a total of $329,450, with $135,000 for use in Idaho. The Tri-state grant covers Idaho, Oregon and Washington including Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep projects in Idaho’s Salmon River country. The ION grant is for California bighorn sheep projects in Idaho, Oregon and Nevada including Idaho’s Owyhee Front, Jacks Creek, and Bruneau/Jarbidge canyons. I believe Bill Pogue would have liked this; he enjoyed many campfires in the Owyhees.

ID WSF is very appreciative for the funds from the Nat’l Wild Sheep Foundation, as well as funding from the Mid-West WSF and an IDFG Commission Grant. I would also like to acknowledge the hard work and time put in by ID WSF Board members and IDFG staff in applying for these grants. For our part, ID WSF has promised $187,450 in helicopter time, jet boat charter, radio collars and Wildlife Technician time towards these projects.

This is my last President’s Message, after the banquet in April 2023 I will step into the Past President position and Josh Miller will become President. Josh has spent time around campfires. He is an avid hunter and conservationist who works in the natural resources field. Josh has been an integral part of ID WSF’s recent growth, and he has led the ID WSF social media and marketing outreach. With people like Josh, and all of you, there is a future for wild things.

Bill London
President
Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation

If there is a future for wild things, then it is the burden of those who have reached farther than me, to save them for the rest of us. It will be done by those whose convictions were forged in campfires.

- Bill Pogue, IDFG Conservation Officer
Nominations for the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation

Board of Directors are being accepted

The deadline for nominations is January 31st, 2023. Nominations may be mailed to P.O. Box 8224, Boise, 83707 or emailed to info@idahowildsheep.org

Idaho WSF Bylaws state:

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Section II
Election and Term of the Board of Directors

Each Director shall be elected for a term of two (2) years, with half of the board being elected each year for staggered terms.

Meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30 PM MST. Board members may attend meetings in person or by Zoom video call.

Participation in one or more of the following committees: Banquet, Fundraising, Conservation, Marketing/Membership, Social Media/Website, Lottery, Journal, and Outreach.

Board members must abide by the Idaho WSF board member code of ethics.

For copies of the bylaws and code of ethics, please contact the Idaho WSF office at 345-6171.

I would like to nominate __________________________________________

for the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation Board of Directors.

(Please feel free to copy this form and nominate as many people as you would like. Self-nominations are also encouraged)

PLEASE ENCLOSE A BIO OF THE NOMINEE FOR THE BALLOT!

___________________________                 __________________
Signed                            Date
My interest in hunting bighorn sheep came from my father Danny, not because he had hunted sheep but because for 19 years, he had unsuccessfully applied for a bighorn tag. I wanted to go bighorn hunting so bad, but knew it was difficult; difficult to draw a tag, difficult to scout, difficult to backpack the country, and difficult to locate a ram. The second year I applied for the coveted tag; I was drawn! It was difficult; difficult to draw a tag, difficult to scout, difficult to locate a ram. The next day I applied for the coveted tag; I was drawn!

I was thinking that if I do my research and scout, I've got a shot at a bighorn ram. I phoned about 12 previous sheep hunters, who were a wealth of knowledge. I spoke with three ID WSF Board Directors – Chuck, Mitch, and Bill. I requested the harvest data for my unit from the Idaho Department of Fish & Game. I even found trails on Google Earth that went right across scree slopes, those had to be from sheep.

Luckily my father is a pilot, so we flew into the unit for four days of scouting. It was humbling to see the country we'd be in, not much of it was flat. We saw a band of sheep, but no mature rams. Not very encouraging.

The hunt team was me, my father and brother Isaac. Three days before the opener we flew into a remote airstrip and were disappointed to find the area “crowded”. There was another party there and one of them had a rifle. Later, on the trail we met two others, one who was also hunting sheep. Everyone was friendly and I hoped we would all spread out enough. After a while we left the trail and were working up a drainage when a wolf walked by us. Caught off guard, no one had a gun handy, and it walked away. We set camp well up the drainage with plans to top the ridge in the morning to glass a basin we wanted to hunt opening day.

By Marcus Beachy, (as told to Bill London)

The next morning, we hiked up to the higher ridges and found ewes, lambs, and a young ram. Our spirits were high until we peeked over a ridge and saw a camp with two men glassing into the same basin. How can such a large wilderness be this crowded? We put our base camp a half mile further up the ridge in the next saddle hoping everyone would have a bit more elbow room. It was a dry camp, so we had to hike down to a creek and carry up nine gallons of water. We kept spotting sheep but no mature rams.

Opener Eve, we left some gear in base camp then took four days’ worth of food 1,000’ up a different mountain to set a spike camp. Once camp was in place, we spread out to glass the country in anticipation of the season opener. While we found ewes, we also found someone’s spike camp 1,000’ below us. I wondered what their plans were. If we got to talk with them, would it be competition or cooperation. It was decided to be out on the mountain at 4:30am for the opener.

Opening morning! As we hiked out the ridge in the dark, we could see a light in the other camp’s tent. That day we found sheep tracks and a band of ten ewes with two young rams. The following day was the second of the season but the fourth day on the mountain with no mature ram sightings. That afternoon we had a pow-wow, stay or move? In a mind-blowing example of modern technology, I discovered that I had cell phone coverage. Dad phoned his longtime friend and experienced sheep hunter David Byler for his opinion. David suggested one more day to look into the more timbered areas, then move down. I phoned Bill London who also suggested moving down the mountain and to look for small springs or green spots.

That next day produced lion tracks and a spring. It was time to move on. I had become concerned that my rifle scope may have been bumped off. So, we did a quick accuracy check. I ranged a white rock at 604 yards to shoot at. I had been practicing long shots for this hunt. I dialed in my 300 WSM and squeezed off a round. The bullet struck 3” high at 604 yards, scopes good.

The next day was long. We packed up spike camp, hiked to base camp and packed it up too. In all we packed nine miles to reset base camp. Along the way we passed a lake! It was clean, cold and clear. Water that didn’t need to be hauled – what a luxury! We hiked out a ridge and found an old camp site with about an hour of light left in the day. There was lots of smoke from summer fires, so I was worried about being able to glass the next day. Our spirits were raised when Isaak heard rams butting heads in the distance and we found the lower jaws of two bighorn sheep near camp. Other sheep hunters had been here before us, and they had been successful.

We were up early and separated to cover more country. At 7:30am I spotted cream-colored spots on a scree slope two miles away. I zoomed in the spotting scope thinking, “those are not sheep” then saw one I realized, “those are sheep!” I radioed Dad and Isaac about the sheep sighting and that one might be a shooter ram. Turns out Dad and Isaac were both entering camp at the same time, discouraged from not seeing sheep, when they heard my radio call. They hiked to my position to watch the sheep and to make a game plan.
Isaac and I went back to break camp while Dad watched the sheep. We then hiked about ¾ mile down a ridge to be across the drainage from the sheep. They are still 2,000 yards away, but I could now tell they were four rams. This time Isaac stayed on the spotting scope while Dad and I dropped 500' and moved within 730 yards of the rams. The rams are drinking from a small spring on the steep hillside. Our side was steep too, I wasn’t sure how much closer we can get. We climbed to a small knob; it was as close as we could get. I checked the range, 604 yards, exactly the distance I had practiced just a couple days ago.

The four rams were bedded, two shooters and two youngsters. I positioned my rifle for a shot, there was no wind. Dad was on the spotting scope. One of the shooters would eventually stand up and offer a shot. Oddly one of the youngsters suddenly jumped up as if spooked, then ran over to the older rams. One of the shooters stood up offering a broadside shot, which I took.

Dad saw the bullet vapor trail in the spotting scope and the dirt fly up behind the ram. He thought I had missed high. At first, I lost sight of the ram in my scope due to the rifle recoil. Dad saw the ram running with a red spot on his chest, then it rolled backwards and fell over. Yells and cheering echoed through the canyon! It was truly special to have both my father and brother with me on such a unique hunt.

The ram, my ram, was a beautiful sight to see and, the feeling when I first held those horns in my hands is hard to explain.

Isaac hiked over to us, for pictures and to process the ram. All the while the other rams just hung out watching us.

There was a trail about three miles down the drainage, it led to the airstrip. We started packing at 6:30pm and made a half mile before camping on a gravel bar in a creek bottom. Most importantly there was water in the creek. Sheep backstraps were skewered on willow sticks, bit of salt and pepper was added, then they were slowly cooked for an hour over the fire. When done the meat was slightly seared with a slight crust that held in the juices. The result was beyond delicious!

The next morning’s hike in the creek bottom became a nightmare of thick brush and rocky ground. We decided to pack up to a ridge for better hiking. This worked for a while but eventually the ridge dropped back into the confluence of two drainages. We were stuck in the bottom again with thick brush, deadfalls, and rockslides. There was an old, abandoned trail that helped when we could find it, just to have it disappear again.

When hiking along above the creek we heard rustling in the brush below us. I tossed a rock into the brush to flush out whatever was down there. Nothing moved. On a whim, I howled like a wolf. Suddenly a wolf ran out of the brush, crossed the creek, and went into other bushes. Again, my rifle was strapped onto my pack. Dad quickly unstrapped the rifle and handed it to me. As I knelt down the wolf reappeared, and I shot it. It was all so fast. Later the Foundation for Wildlife Management (www.foundationforwildlifemanagement.org) would reimburse me $1,000 for harvesting that wolf.

By 7 pm we finally hit the good trail! It felt like a highway. A couple hours later as dusk settled into the canyon, we arrived at the airstrip. While tired, I was happily satisfied with this family hunt, in the rugged Idaho wilderness, for the iconic bighorn sheep. Maybe next year my father will draw a tag and we can return to do it again.
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hunting for my bull that fall, I was delightfully surprised to apply for a bighorn ram tag the following year. While trolling hunts, I finally drew a bull elk tag in GMU 37. This is a dream I had but never dreamed I’d have the opportunity to hunt bighorns, let alone in these mountains; my favorite range in the state.

In 2021, after a twenty-year drought applying for controlled hunts, I was putting in for an Idaho sheep and I had just been notified that I drew the best ram I had ever seen. It's also an ideal landscape for bighorn sheep, one sporting a high clearance 4x4 and a willingness to beat the odds of drawing one was slim to none. The story of how this happened is nothing short of a miracle.

Congratulations, you were successful in drawing the Controlled Hunt Win listed below:

Controlled Hunt Win

Dear CLINT BARG,

Congratulations, you were successful in drawing the Controlled Hunt listed below:

Bighorn Sheep - Controlled 5019

I literally fell out of my chair. My 2nd attempt at applying for an Idaho sheep and I had just been notified that I drew a highly sought-after tag in arguably one of the best units in the state. The reputation of the rams in this unit hasn't happened by accident. Thousands of volunteer hours, habitat improvement projects, and domestic sheep allotment buyouts over the years have allowed the bighorn sheep to flourish. I’m extremely grateful to all the folks who have dedicated so much time and effort to making this a premier bighorn sheep hunting unit. I fully intend to pay it forward through volunteer work, donations, and a continuous membership to ID WSE.

Over the past several years I’ve spent countless hours in this range exploring, climbing, and hunting in this wild country. It’s safe to say my knowledge of this unit is better than most. However, when it comes to hunting sheep, area knowledge is worthless without putting heavy focus in the following areas: gear, fitness, research, and, most importantly, scouting.

Gear: Of all the gear one needs to be successful hunting sheep, I don’t think I’m alone when I say optics are king, good optics are essential. I was all set in that department, but I needed a better tripod so I purchased a major upgrade. Let me tell you right now, if you don’t use a tripod, get one. They are a game changer for finding critters, whether you’re using binoculars or a spotting scope.

Fitness: Those who know me realize I hike and climb frequently. Prepping for this hunt only intensified my time in the mountains. I vowed to spend as much time as my job would allow, hiking in this rugged, vertical range to not only stay in shape, but to also learn as much as possible.

Research: I have heard the sheep hunting community can be tight lipped on sharing info, but let me say, this is a false statement. I gained some very valuable insight from several amazing people; reaching out to locals, wildlife biologists, current/past ID WSE directors, plus others to get guidance, tips, and information about hunting sheep in this area. Every single person I spoke with was extremely supportive and enthusiastic in answering all my questions. I think the best advice I received was from previous ID WSE director, Jerry Wall.

Throughout the summer, I hit several areas that looked promising, based off intel I had received, plus past sightings I had witnessed personally. It wasn’t until late August that a good friend, Rocco Cuda, and I found a super-hot area. In one weekend, we spotted 30 rams, a few of them approaching full curl. Knowing I drew the late hunt, it certainly wasn’t guaranteed this area would remain hot, but we both felt this was where my hunt should begin.

Four days prior to my hunt I made the decision to go in early to hopefully secure the campsite at the trailhead of this promising area, plus do more scouting for rams. Rocco would be joining me Tuesday evening, the night before the opener. I arrived on a Saturday afternoon. Upon my arrival I was greeted with the unpredictable weather this range is known for – heavy rain that quickly turned to snow, blanketing the valley floor I was to call home for the next several days. Determined to scout as soon as possible, I took full advantage of a minor break in the weather to begin glassing from the trailhead. It didn’t take me long to find a ram; a dead ram. Perched atop him was a golden eagle doing his best to capitalize on this ram’s untimely death. My first reaction was a somber one. Questions began to flood my mind. What caused this ram to die? Was he shot and left? Were the other rams in this once hot area pushed out? Before I could even begin to find answers to those questions the weather, once again, turned ugly.

To go in early to hope-
I was forced to retreat back to the comforts of my rig for the remainder of the afternoon and evening.

Sunday morning, I awoke to clear skies and warmer temps – a welcomed change in the weather! Within minutes of waking up I was scouting from the trailhead; most of the snow melted. After relocating the dead ram, I began to look for ones on the hoof; as luck would have it, I did. Not 300 yards to the north were two young rams grazing along. This renewed my excitement for this area.

Throughout the remainder of the day, I set up my camp, cut up some firewood and glassed the ridges above me, looking for sheep. Over the next few days, I scouted hard in and around the area I intended to hunt, and was not disappointed. This area was still hot with sheep (ewes, lambs, rams); my excitement was building! It was fun to watch these animals in their element, doing their thing.

Two days from the opener I spotted a chocolate ram that I really liked – way darker than his buddies. His horns were wide and heavy; definitely unique. He wasn’t full curl but I didn’t care; I was going for this ram on opening day!

As promised, Rocco arrived at hunt camp Tuesday evening. We commenced to set up a fine base camp to work from. I showed him some blurry pictures of the ram I wanted. The plan was set to go after him the next morning. After a quick dinner, a beer, and some storytelling, it was time for bed. I could hardly wait for the alarm to go off.

Day 1 – At 5:15 am the day had finally arrived, the day I could actually hunt these animals rather than just watching them. I won’t lie, it was like Christmas morning to a 6-year-old. I felt like sprinting up the trail to get close to where I’d seen this chocolate ram. With headlamps on and packs filled with gear, our hike began. As daylight graced us with its presence, we entered the clearing in the basin I wanted to be. By 8 am we had just entered a stand of trees when Rocco spotted a ram ahead and above us. It was him, the chocolate ram, I couldn’t believe it! Standing broadside at an acceptable distance, it was time to execute.

Now this is where this story of excitement and jubilation takes an ugly turn – I missed and the ram bugged out. To say I was disappointed is an understatement. I was heartbroken, embarrassed and not much of a conversationalist the remainder of the day. We kept after it, saw more rams, but ended up back at camp, soaked, tired and defeated. It was time to regroup, dry out and make plans for the next day.

Day 2 – After a rough night, we awoke to ominous skies. Still recovering and drying our gear out from the previous day, we elected to stay close to camp. Not wanting to be completely stationary, we decided to retrieve the horns from the dead ram I saw six days prior. It was a good little climb that helped burn off some depression and rejuvenate my spirits. I was excited to see this dead ram up close.

Upon examination, it appeared his death occurred within 10-14 days, however, with no bullet holes or sign of predation, it was a mystery why or how this ram died. After taking several pictures from various angles, we detached the head. We got off the mountain and back to camp without getting wet, but more importantly, without getting struck by lightning!

Day 3 – The next morning we were blessed with starry skies and hit the trail at 6 am, back up to the basin where I had missed the ram. Upon entering the clearing, we spotted a decent ram about a thousand yards out, at the edge of some timber. Not being able to see if he had any friends with him, we elected to climb the opposing side of the basin to set up our spotters and check things out. We found a nice perch to glass from at about 8,500 feet and commenced to pick the mountain apart. As we had hoped, the ram had two other buddies with him, a smaller ram, plus a bigger chocolate ram, however, not the one seen earlier! Broomed off on his left side, extended curl on his right; he was a dandy. If you haven’t guessed it by now, I have a thing for chocolate rams.

Given the time of day when we spotted the three rams, I knew it was getting close to when they scratch out a nest, bedding down for the day. Just like clockwork they did, above a little stand of trees at about 9,000 feet. I asked Rocco to stay put while I stalked to the trees for a shot at the chocolate ram. After an hour-long stalk I was at a cliff band right below the small stand of trees. The thermals were working in my favor but finding a route over this cliff band was a challenge. The first route I chose ended up being more than I could handle, especially with a rifle in hand. So, I dropped down lower to a route which led me directly into the trees. Once there I was
only about 60 yards from the ram, but had no clear shot.

At this point the winds began to swirl. Whether they smelled me, saw me, or heard me, they sensed something wasn’t right and started up the mountain, to my left. I knew I had to step out to get a good shot but they also had to stop. With the chocolate ram in the lead they, fortunately, all stopped above me at about 150 yards, just long enough for me to pull up and squeeze. Boom! The shot hit home and the ram lunged forward, stopped, and dropped. He then rolled almost the entire distance between us, coming to a stop not 20 yards from where I pulled the trigger. I couldn’t believe I closed the deal!

As I walked up to this magnificent animal, emotions ran high. Being able to hunt bighorn sheep is a priceless gift anywhere but here, among Idaho’s giants of the Lost, there were no words. The stars had aligned.

Final Notes:
Both rams were checked in, inspected, and pinned with Idaho Dept. of Fish & Game. My ram with a silver pin, the dead ram with a gold pin. My ram was 7.5 years old and the dead ram was 3.5 years old. Tissue samples and nasal swabs were taken from the dead ram in hopes of determining the cause of death.

Author’s Equipment:
Rifle: Winchester Model 70, 7mm WSM
Scope: Leopold Vari-X 3x9
Optics: Swarovski ATS HD 65; EL 10x42
Pack: Mystery Ranch, Terraframe 65
Rangefinder: Vortex Impact 1000
Tent: Hilleberg Allak, Soulo
Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation

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2010 Newly collared bighorn returns to the mountains - Belli Canyon Bighorn Capture

2008 Lou Rupp presents the 2008 Grass Roots Award to Jerry, Walter at the 2008 national WSF convention.

1996 Stan Potts and Dave Melton at the annual Banquet & Fundraiser.

1985 Newsletter Gary Best, Reid, Mike with Owyhee ram and ewes.

1993 Banquet Burk Mantel and Glenn Gearhard

2014 Jim Jeffress with Jon Beals from the Governor’s Office of Species Conservation drawing the winning tag for the 2014 Idaho Bighorn Lottery Tag.

2016 - Ed Rochnowski’s family donated this mount to Idaho WSF now on display at Sportsman’s Warehouse in Meridian.

2008 Will Marcroft and Ed Gammons at the 2008 Banquet & Fundraiser.

Volunteers help removing Guzzlers.

HISTORY BOOKS

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HELENA, MONTANA
The Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation held its annual Summer Social and Idaho Bighorn Lottery Tag Drawing on July 29th. Over 150 members, dignitaries and supporters attended events in Lewiston, Idaho Falls and Boise. Individual raffles were held at each location.

The Idaho Bighorn Lottery tag was drawn by Frances Cassirer PhD, Sr Wildlife Research Biologist for Idaho Department of Fish and Game. Cassirer’s experience, knowledge, and leadership of bighorn sheep issues has made her a leader in bighorn sheep field research and management not only in the States of Idaho, Oregon, and Washington but across the west. In collaboration with University of Washington Vet school and Dr. Tom Besser, Cassirer has led the search development and utilization of the highly promising Capture-test-remove method of controlling Movi, a bacteria causing pneumonia. This management tool is responsible for the Hells Canyon bighorn herd currently being Movi free. The technique is being implemented across the west and in Canada.

The lottery for this bighorn sheep tag has raised over $2.1 million dollars for wild sheep in Idaho over the past 31 years. This year the 6th consecutive year the lottery has raised a record amount, with $335,008 raised this year and more than $315,000 going back to Fish and Game for bighorn sheep conservation. This amount was over $120,000 more than the previous record of $212,000 raised in 2020. The lucky recipient of this year’s tag was Paul Donaldson out of Montana. Donaldson was one of over 2,800 entries from across all 50 states, Canada and Mexico who bought anywhere from one to several hundred chances, supporting the efforts of the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation and IDFG to “keep bighorn sheep on the mountain.”

This year the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation presented a second check to IDFG for $15,000 to sponsor a helicopter survey this fall for the Bruneau/Jarbidge area. IDFG Wildlife Biologist and Bighorn Lead, Hollie Miyasaki attended the Idaho Falls event. IDFG Director Ed Schriever and Wildlife Bureau Chief Jon Rachael were at the Boise event with Director Schriever delivering a complimentary speech and significantly referring to the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation as “colleagues.” Director Schriever briefly discussed the new IDFG bighorn sheep Action Plan as clear direction for field work for IDFG and the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation. Director Schriever ended with an emphasis to the fact that together we are getting a lot accomplished and the strong partnership with the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation and its commitment to conservation.
GUIDELINES

- The 2023 Lottery Tag shall be valid for use in any open controlled bighorn hunt, except Unit 11.
- "Tickets" are controlled hunt applications.
- Ticket purchasers and persons named on tickets must be at least 18 years old and must be eligible to hold a hunting license in Idaho.
- Tickets are void where the ticket/tag sale is prohibited.
- This tag is non-transferrable.
- This tag (and hunting license, if needed) will only be issued to an eligible applicant (the person named on the ticket drawn).
- Drawing will be conducted July 28, 2023.
- **ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME RULE IS WAIVED** for this tag.
- Need not be present to win.
- Additional rules apply.

Ticket prices
- 1 ticket for $20
- 6 tickets for $100
- 14 tickets for $166.75
- 25 tickets for $250

NO limit to number of tickets purchased per individual.
Deadline to purchase tickets is July 24, 2023.

Purchase tickets online at www.idahowildsheep.org
10-DAY GUIDED ALASKA DALL SHEEP HUNT WITH ALASKA GUIDE SERVICE

**All** Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation LIFE and CENTENNIAL members will be entered into this drawing. No purchase necessary but, **YOU MUST BE PRESENT TO WIN**.

Winner will be drawn at the 38th Annual Idaho Wild Sheep Banquet and Fundraiser on April 1st at the Boise Centre in Boise, Idaho. Banquet registration is required.

Life members will receive one entry and Centenial members will receive three entries. Life and Centennial memberships can be purchased now through the banquet. Current Life members can upgrade to a Centennial membership.

**Hunt date:** August 8—18, 2024

Included: Food, lodging, trophy care, and handling of game meat as well as any transportation deemed necessary by the guide is the responsibility of Alaska Guide Service and included in the hunt. First and last days of hunts are travel days into and out of camps. Transportation costs and arrangements between the hunting area and city of Fairbanks, Alaska on these days is the responsibility of the guide outfitter and are included in the hunt as well as all land use fees.

Not included: Pre and post hunt travel, accommodations, tags, licenses, taxes and tips.

First and last days of all hunts are travel days into and out of camps.

Must be eligible to hunt and fish in Alaska.

Caribou available if coordinated with the outfitter for a trophy fee of $2,500.00. Hunt may be transferred to first degree kinship only.

**Also included:**

**LIFE SIZE SHEEP MOUNT**

Valued at $7,750.00

**Donated by:**

**BRUSH COUNTRY STUDIOS**
By Jon Roth

This adventure for my ¾ sheep slam started in 2017, with good friend Greg Davis. Greg had booked a Stone sheep hunt with Tahltan Outfitters and invited me to accompany him. This was a true wilderness adventure horseback hunt in NW British Columbia. Although we had rain and miserable weather during six of the ten-day hunt Greg got a nice ram. Fast forward to 2020, the dreadful year of COVID and my cancelled hunt. Although praying for the 2021 season to be my year, Jim Peterson, (Owner/Guide) of Tahltan Outfitters, suggested the first hunt of 2022 would be the best opportunity for me to get back to the mountain for a Stone ram. I couldn’t agree more and jumped all over the opportunity Jim proposed to me.

July 27, 2022, found me in route from Idaho to Smithers, B.C. to pick up a good friend from Wisconsin, plus a future friend from Kansas. Onward to Dease Lake, the end of our twenty-eight hour road trip. Forty-five minutes after loading up the float plane, we set down at base camp and began sorting gear and weighing panniers for the 8-hour pack trip to our spike camp. Upon arrival, camp was set and put into place, plans were made, and we hit cots, with dreams to come. Day one could not happen quick enough!

Kansas hunter, Brent Scott was the first to score, harvesting a 10-year-old ram the first evening. My first day resulted in locating several immature rams. Days two, three and four were more of the same - several younger rams, however, with rain, fog and gusting winds. The pressure of finding a legal ram was building, knowing my days were getting fewer. We chose to pursue a nine-year-old, broken-horned ram on days five and six. Unfortunately, both days resulted in failed stalks due to his location on the mountain. We moved to a different mountain range in search of a new band of rams on day seven, however, we only to turn up the skull of a giant bull moose, plus more nasty weather throughout the day. We were worn down by the time we returned to camp.

Bound and determined for success, on day eight we focused our attention on the area we had last located the broken-horn ram. Upon reaching the top of a large basin, we spotted several ewes and lambs below us, some bedded, some feeding. After an hour of spotting, we had not located the ram. I decided to relocate down the rim one hundred yards or so, immediately locating two young rams bedded just below a limestone ridge. Our target ram was not seen hanging out with them, so we decided to relocate, in hopes of locating him. After we had dropped down several benches, my guide, Wade Jensen, suddenly hit the ground; he had spotted a ram! After getting the spotting scope set up, we concluded we had not seen this ram before. We also knew immediately we had located a quality ram. However, we knew we...
needed to move down to a lower bench to better determine just how good this ram actually was; that took one and a half hours. We all agreed he was a shooter ram.

The moment of truth arrived at 11:45 A.M. when the ram finally stood from his bed and stretched, quartering to us, presenting a perfect front quarter shot opportunity. By this time, we also determined this ram was a full curl, eight-year-old legal ram; he was about to make a five-year quest come true. The shot distance was 379 yards. The ram spun to his right at the impact, going 15-20 yards up the hill before staggering off the limestone cliff, falling 600' to his final resting place on the mountain. I was on cloud 9 during the decent to the ram. Once I saw him up close, he is most definitely a dream come true! I have decided to name my ram Stone Ram 444, as his horn plug number is 444.
**Members**

**It's Renewal Time**

**DON'T LET THIS BE YOUR LAST ISSUE!**

**Annual membership** will expire December 31st

*New member’s who joined within the last 3 months under the current 2023 member promo, expire December 31, 2023.

- Annual membership $45
- 3-year membership $120
- LIFE membership $1,000
- LIFE membership payment plan $87.50 per month for 12 months
- LIFE upgrade to CENTENNIAL $1,000
- LIFE upgrade to CENTENNIAL payment plan $87.50 per month for 12 months
- CENTENNIAL membership $2,000
- CENTENNIAL membership payment plan $170 per month for 12 months

*See member promotion for a Mountain Goat Raffle on the next page.

All LIFE and CENTENNIAL members will be entered into the LIFE Member Raffle for a 10-day Alaska Dall Sheep Hunt with Alaska Guide Service and, a life size full sheep mount with Brush Country Studios. Winner will be drawn at the 38th Annual Banquet & Fundraiser to be held April 1, 2023, in Boise. All LIFE members receive one entry and CENTENNIAL members receive three entries. No purchase necessary but, **YOU MUST BE PRESENT TO WIN.** Banquet registration required. See life member raffle flyer for detail.

**2023 Member Promotion & Raffle**

- New/Renewing Annual Members: $75 includes 1 raffle ticket.
- New Life Members: $1,000 includes 2 raffle tickets.
- Current Life upgrade to Centennial: $1,000 includes 2 raffle tickets.
- New Centennial Members: $2,000 includes 4 tickets.
- Additional tickets may be purchased—**MEMBERS ONLY** $50 EACH. No Limit.

Join/Renew/Upgrade/Enter to Win

5-day Guided Mountain Goat Hunt with Larry Benda of Alaska Fair Chase Guiding

Hunt takes place in Haines, Alaska in October/November 2023 (dates to be finalized with outfitter). Winner needs to be in very good physical condition to be successful. Goats average 9-10”. Hunt includes guiding, meals, transportation from Haines to hunting area.

Not included: items outlined in gear list, travel to and from Haines, Alaska, lodging before and after hunt, hunting license ($160), mountain goat tag ($600), gratuities, and shipment of meat/trophy.


**Join/Renew/Upgrade and purchase tickets at**

www.idahowildsheep.org

Join, renew, upgrade now and YOU could be going on an Alaska Mtn Goat Hunt or, an Alaska Dall Sheep Hunt!
Horn in Idaho’s Frank Church Wilderness. Backpacking in remote, rugged country was not foreign to me, and gear was not a concern. Over the past decade I have acquired the best I could and continued to upgrade as I had funds available to do so. Luckily, I had all of the gear and equipment recommended on Craig’s gear list and only needed to replace a few articles of clothing from my closet. I’ve typically been a KUIU guy, but after working with Justin Sparks of Kryptek for the 2022 Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation Banquet, I decided to give Kryptek a try. Kryptek is an Idaho company and has been a big supporter of Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation for years. This past year was my first year working directly with them; I was immediately impressed with Justin’s commitment to ensuring Kryptek’s designs allow customers to be comfortable and successful. For my hunt, I chose their Altitude line and ordered the Takur rain gear, Tora line, and a few other articles of clothing. With gear and clothing taken care of, my biggest pri-

British Columbia Mountain Goat..... about as remote as you can get!

By Josh Miller

I have always had a fascination with mountain goats. In fact, my love of mountain goats even predates my love of wild sheep. My work computer’s screen saver is a mountain goat; my truck’s license plate has a mountain goat; the number of mountain goat books and knickknacks found in my home and office are more than I can immediately call to mind. A mountain goat hunt on Kodiak was my first “dream hunt” that I had as a kid. My first out-of-state application was for a Utah mountain goat over 10 years ago. After years of seeing “unsuccessful” next to my name in many subsequent draws and raffles, I decided I wasn’t waiting anymore! With my wife’s support and encouragement, I set out on the daunting task to book a hunt. I talked to several outfitters from Alaska and Canada at Sheep Show and, after talking with and getting a recommendation from my buddy Jim Warner, I decided to go with long-time Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation supporter, Craig Kiselbach of Terminus Mountain Outfitters in Northern British Columbia. Craig offers hunts for stone sheep, moose, mountain goat, caribou, black bear, and wolves in an awesomely remote area once hunted by the legendary Skook Davidson. I knew I was in for one of the most memorable trips I could possibly imagine.

After the hunt was booked, the preparation began. I have hunted Dall Sheep in Alaska and Rocky Mountain Big Horn in Idaho’s Frank Church Wilderness.
End of September finally arrived, and everything was packed up. Having never been to Canada and wanting to see the country, I opted to drive to Fort Nelson, BC. A straight drive would have been 24 hours, but I broke it into 3 days in order to drive to Fort Nelson, BC. A straight drive to see the country, I opted to drive.

Never been to Canada and wanting to see everything was packed up. Having 30 minutes of driving to and from the gym. It took a while to get into a groove, but once I did the pounds started coming off and I could feel myself getting stronger. By the time my hunt rolled around I was down to 190 lbs and feeling great!

From the lake camp, our next stage of travel was on horseback. It was a 3-4 hour ride to our base camp and another 4-5 hour ride to the hunting country. We saddled up -- I was given a paint horse named Bolt -- loaded the pack string, and headed out. Every second was filled with stunning scenery. Our trail was rutted quite deep; Josh indicated at the very least it was cut in the 1930's. During the ride, we visited about the status of sheep in Idaho and BC. I told Josh about the 6 action plans IDWSF is implementing this coming winter; he talked about the 90 burn projects WSSBC started to improve winter range for stone sheep, which is the area's biggest problem. We got to base camp just before dark, tended the horses, and ate dinner around a campfire before heading to bed. After breakfast the next morning, we loaded up for the remaining 4-5 hour ride to the hunting country.

The views became increasingly more incredible as we climbed higher, turned around each corner, and traveled over every ridge. We saw two grizzlies that both made the wise decision to change directions upon seeing us. We later came over a small ridge and saw a band of stone sheep in the trail! As my first time seeing one, the encounter is burned into my memory. Further along, I looked below us to a large cliff face with a small patch of trees and grass below it. I hollered at the wrangler, Denny, and pointed to a white dot that I thought might be a goat. With all our optics packed away, we only had access to binoculars but were able to at least confirm that it was indeed a goat. We continued riding until we found a suitable spot to set up a spike camp.

The next morning, after a quick breakfast, we walked over to a nice glassing spot. We glassed for a while and saw a group of 3 Stone Sheep rams, but no goats. We saddled up and rode down and back up a valley to a spot where we could tie the horses and walk out to a ridge where Josh and Denny had seen several billies during stone sheep season. We spent the day glassing and hiking, looking down chutes and in crevices for a bedded billy. About a mile away, we found a nanny and kid across the canyon and watched them feed. Josh then spotted a lone goat further down the canyon. We both put our spotters on it and watched while it was bedded. It was large-bodied and alone, both very good signs that it was a billy. Finally, it got up and turned. When the sun hit its horns just right, our anticipation grew. I was reasonably sure it was a billy based on body size and from being able to see horns from over a mile away. It was too late in the day to make a play on that goat, so we just sat and watched while it fed and moved around. Then it squatted, the wind was let out of my sail. A goat’s urination position is the best and most proven method to determine the sex of a goat; a billy will stretch out to pee, whereas a nanny will squat. This one likely wasn’t a billy as we originally thought.

We began to plan for the next day. The big ridge where we saw the 3 goats seemed to be a good bet, but we wanted to know what the lone goat we saw while riding in the previous day was. We decided to high-tail it back to the horses and ride back past camp a couple miles to see if we could turn that goat up close to where we’d seen it the previous day. As we crested the ridge, Denny looked back and gave me a thumbs up that it was still there. We rode to a good vantage point, dismounted, and put spotters on the goat that was now bedding on a rocky cliff. At 1200 yards, it had all the right signs of being a billy: it was alone, large-bodied, had horns with a gradual curve; the bases were bigger than its eyes. Beyond those features, the first thing I noticed was its hair; it had a really long beard and great chaps! Based on my experience, I
was sure this goat was a billy! Both Josh and Denny agreed that it looked like a good billy, but wanted to get a better look to try and determine his age. The only pre-determined criteria I had when coming into the hunt was that I wanted a mature billy with good hair. In my limited experience with goats, this one looked exactly like what I was hoping to find. We didn’t have time that evening to get closer to determine age, so we rode back to camp, ate dinner, and went to bed. Needless to say, sleep did not come easily for me that night; I couldn’t stop thinking about that first mountain goat hunt!

The next morning, we ate a quick bite, saddled up and rode back to our vantage point. He was still close to where he was the night before! We made our way down a ridge where we figured I would have a good shot at him. That ridge was the most spruce-infested, dog-hair-thick, jumbled pile of trees I’ve ever had to walk through. We made it down to 430 yards across from him. There was no way I could shoot through the tangled mess of trees, but we were concerned that if we kept going, he would see or hear us and get nervous and leave. We quietly made a shooting lane by carefully removing branches and small trees from a small spot where I was able to sit with all 3 packs piled up for a rest. I settled in and started making some dry-fire practice shots while the billy was bedded down. Josh and Denny got in behind me and set up the spotter. Josh studied him the best he could, but with poor lighting, he couldn’t see rings yet. The light finally spotlighted the goat and Josh could see 7 or 8 rings, which is a good range, as 10-13 is often the max they live, with 13 being ancient for a goat. Josh estimated him at 9” and 5.25-5.5” bases. I told them this billy met my criteria, especially for my first mountain goat hunt!

It became a waiting game for him to stand up and give me a shot. I sat there and kept making practice shots on him to calm my nerves. Finally, he stood up! I put a round in the chamber and waited for a broadside shot and Josh’s ok. He turned, Josh said “shoot”, and I squeezed the trigger. Solid hit! He was still on his feet, so I put another round in the chamber and hit him again. The 2nd shot didn’t feel good; Josh confirmed that the second shot hit further back, but that the first shot hit lungs, right behind the shoulder. We watched and waited, losing sight of him when he went behind a cliff face. We waited a few minutes to see if he would roll down. When he didn’t, we started hipfogging down the hill, leaving one person to always have eyes on the last place we saw him. We got to the bottom and ravens had already started showing up, which I took to be a good sign. We started up the steep face to find him. It was about a 300-yard climb up from the bottom. As we got nearly to the top, we still hadn’t found him until suddenly, a big, white mass stood up. We put 3 more rounds in him to try to anchor him before he went off a cliff, but he was determined to go off that cliff. I ran to get out of his way as he took his last step, fell off the cliff, and started rolling down the hill. We all held our breath, as a rolling goat is the last thing anyone wants to see. Often, they break horns or damage their cape, or worst of all, they get hung up in an unretrievable spot. Luckily, he stopped in some brush just below us and had relatively little damage, just some character marks on his horns and a small chip off the top of one horn. We confirmed 8 annuli, making him 9 years old, 5.5” bases, and 9” on his longer side. His hair was magnificent, and I couldn’t have been happier! We cleaned him up a little and took pictures, had some celebratory sips from my flask of Bighorn Bourbon, and then got to work caping and deboning him for the pack out. The pack out wasn’t terrible. Steep and thick, but with 3 of us we made it out in just a few hours. We made it back to camp before dark and spent the evening reliving the day, eating dinner, and telling stories.

The next morning, while packing up to head back to base camp, I was filled with conflicting emotions. I was ecstatic to have my goat, but sad that my time in the field was coming to an end. I only had a few hours left of being up in mountain goat/stone sheep country and just a couple days left before returning to civilization. I guess that is the duality of hunting: you want to be successful in the hunt, but the consequence of that success is having to leave the country you love.

The ride back to base camp was miserably windy. Luckily, good rain gear with a down jacket and pants kept me warm. Once back at camp we took care of the cape and got it salted. Josh also owns a tannery, so he took excellent care of the cape much more efficiently than I could have. We cooked up some bacon-wrapped tenderloin as an appetizer and one of the back straps for dinner. I have eaten mountain goat once before, but this one definitely tasted better, more tender, and with excellent flavor. We polished off a bottle of Willis Devil’s Brigade whiskey to celebrate the successful trip and to making new friends. The ride back to the lake was a fast trip with just my gear and goat in the pack boxes. While waiting for the float plane, we talked about possible projects WSSBC and IDWSF could collaborate on in the future. Then a red/white Husky float plane showed up to take me back to the lodge. The flight out was awesome as I was able to recognize where all we had been.

Once at the lodge I was greeted by Craig and his crew. I hung my goat up to dry on his cape poles next to a lucky hunter who killed a huge wolf a few days earlier while moose hunting. We ate pizza and talked about the season until the next plane showed up. As we were flying back to Fort Nelson, I looked over the vastness of the BC wilderness. My trip included 3000 miles of driving, 4 airplane rides, and 20-24 hours on a horse, and yet I only saw a postage stamp of what BC has to offer. I could feel a sense of need to return beginning to grow on that last plane ride, and it continues to grow as I type this. I know I’ll never forget the trip, the sights, or the people I was with throughout the hunt. I can only hope to return someday.
14-DAY GUIDED
STONE SHEEP HUNT
In Northern British Columbia with
GOLDEN BEAR OUTFITTING
August 13-26, 2023

Tickets: $200 each

ONLY 750 Tickets will be sold.

100 Tickets will be held for sale at Banquet only.

Drawing will be held at Banquet on April 1, 2023.

Need not be present to win.

Tickets go on sale January 13, 2023.
“Shodi pointed out one with long heavy horns corkscrewing out of his head at 542 yards. Looking through the scope I could see that this ram was the one I’d been looking for.”

After extensive research, I chose Murgab Company LLC in Tajikistan as my outfitter. This would be a combination hunt of Marco Polo & Ibex out of their famous Hot Spring base camp. With the base camp elevation at 13,600’ and the shots often long, I spent the following months getting myself physically and mentally prepared. I ordered a custom .300 Winchester Magnum rifle for the hunt, Chris offered his personal game. The next day I joined Shodi, his assistant Imomdod Khudododov, and driver Rahmon Guloyozav, as we loaded my Marco Polo ram and found he was in fact quite dead, just past where Shodi had last seen it. The wolves had not found it.

During my time with Shodi he made mention that there are rouge wild yaks that are a threat to the domesticated yaks that are owned by local shepherds. The rouge yak bulls will infiltrate the domestic herd and kill the shepherd’s bulls. These maverick yak bulls proved to be difficult to locate. The next day while visiting with a local shepherd he mentioned he had seen a wild bull yak near one of his herds and he would be happy to show us where it was. Being incredibly hospitable, he first invited us into his small hut and introduced us to his new wife. Afterwards, we followed the shepherd to the yak band and there among the group was a magnificently large black bull yak. We moved in and I shot it straight in the head. To my dismay the bullet glanced off its forehead and into the snowbank behind him. Not what I had expected from a .300 Win Mag at 50 yards. The second shot dropped him. We gave some of the meat to the shepherd and his wife and they were appreciative.

For those of you who have reservations of hunting in Tajikistan I can tell you that I always felt safe. Murgab Company and their people were always with me from Dushanbe on through customs, through gun importation, and through ticket counters. These folks go above and beyond to take care of their clients. The Tajikistan people are friendly, hardworking, fun loving and hospitable, a true joy to be around.

I have been on many hunts around the world. This was the most enjoyable hunt I have been on. You do not want to miss out! Now, to plan my “grand slam” the Stone Sheep.
MURGAB COMPANY LLC
YOUR MARCO POLO & IBEX OUTFITTER

Murgab Company LLC is an Outfitter based in Tajikistan. Our main animals are Large Marco Polo Argali and Pamir Ibex.

"I hunted with Murgab November of 2021. I am 78 years old and have always wanted to shoot a Marco Polo. This was the BEST HUNT OF MY LIFE. The guides, drivers, cooks, every single person, was exceptional. I highly recommend Murgab for your Marco Polo Hunt."

-Tom Sellin (Member of WSF)

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Contact us for information about your next hunt.

www.biglostriveroutfitters.com
By Adam Hairston

My year didn’t start off great as far as getting chances to win a sheep tag. Catching Covid two days prior to the Reno show ended those opportunities. An in-state move resulted in missing the annual Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation banquet and the lifetime member drawing. At that point I had sort of given up getting a tag. When I received an email from the Idaho Department of Fish and Game notifying me, I had drawn a tag I immediately called, in disbelief, to confirm. Sure enough, I was going sheep hunting, in a unit I have long hoped to explore.

Phone calls to the biologist for the unit, past biologists, guides and others all confirmed that I could find a good ram, if I put in my time. Summer scouting was a mix of backpacking, car camping and general exploring to learn the area. I found several nice rams and felt if I could relocate them during the season, I would have a chance at a great ram.

After five days of bowhunting elk in September with my dad, I had to check on work prior to the sheep hunt. The day before the opener I drove to a location where I had found a nice ram. As I was advised, since I was in the second half of the season, everything would change. Deer and elk hunters in the unit would also stir things up. That information was dead on. Four days and a little over 40 miles later, I hadn’t located any of the rams I had seen while scouting. My youngest son came to hunt with me for a couple of days. Upon his arrival I decided to relocate. Friday night my son and I bumped into another of the tag holders in the area we moved to. He had tagged out. A beautiful, broomed ram of the sort I was hoping to find. We talked for a while about strategies and locations. The next morning, my son and I hunted the same drainage, looking for another older ram. On the way out, my son found three rams in a secondary drainage. After a 2,300-foot climb, we were in a position to get a better look at the rams; all younger, so we passed.

At this point I realized if I wanted to find the type of ram I had my heart set on, I would need to change tactics. On day eight I decided to bivy into a drainage to be at a higher elevation earlier in the day, plus be ‘fresh’ to hunt further. That night I saw three rams, one of which looked good in the fading light. It was very hard to sleep that night. I knew I was in a good location and had high hopes. The next morning, after packing up my bivy setup and downing some coffee, I found a ram, then another, then three, then five! Suddenly, I heard a “CRACK”, the rams sparring. So cool. I saw one ram that looked like a shooter but was out of position. I let the rams feed to their daytime beds before making a move up the mountain. My plan was to get above the rams, hopefully for a good shot when they fed back out that night. Well, we all know what they say about the best laid plans; the rams never showed. Their evening pattern was different from morning.

I decided to camp in a saddle at about 10,300 feet that night. I figured I would be in a great position above the rams at first light. Clouds had built during the day, but I figured, like previous days, the energy would come out of the thunderheads when the sun went down. I couldn’t have been more wrong. About 12:30 am my tent was on my face; then the lightning flashed. The brightest I have ever seen and almost immediately the thunder behind it. Luckily the lightning subsided, but the wind did not. I was shivering, with vicious gusts that resulted in a horrifying ‘ripping’ sound. Something on my tent had torn. Rain, hail and snow lashed my hand as I held onto the now torn door. It was getting very western, very quick. I suddenly realized that if I lost my tent, all my clothing, boots and other items would be blown off this high mountain saddle to who knows where. If that happened, I could be in some real trouble. I let go of the door, which immediately started flapping so hard that it started to tatter. I remember thinking to myself, “Prepare to abandon ship!” I got dressed, put on my cold weather gear, rain gear, packed my pack with everything, grabbed the torn door and held on. It was way too dangerous to descend in the dark, in this extremely cliffy country. I wrapped the torn fabric around my fingers, holding on to ride out the storm. At about 5:45 am, I dosed off and was awakened when the fabric was pulled out of my fingers.

At that point, I was done. I put on my headlamp, packed up the tent and hunkered down behind a rock waiting for daylight. My great plan resulted in a scary morning, my son and I hunted the same range twice! The shot was missed. The ram wasn’t a serious fight. One of the rams had different horns than the one we had been glassing. I licked my wounds and hiked down out of the drainage, looking for another older ram. I couldn’t find one, so I adjusted my plans to meet him after he was done chasing elk.

New tent in hand, I was back in the unit late on Thursday in time to do a bit of scouting. I planned a Friday morning hunt that would have me back in time to meet my friend. My research had shown a ram had been taken just south of a trail to a lake. Not really a place where one would expect to find a trophy ram, but I could take a look easily enough, checking it off the list of drainages I planned to hunt.

Friday morning, in the dark, I exited the motorcycle trail and started up to the lake. Walking a trail felt like cheating after the last drainage I hunted. As the trail approached the lake, the drainage formed a sharp V. I left the trail and started side hiking up to the right. I cut up and across deadfall and two big scree fields as the timber thinned. As I moved through the last decent patch of timber, I heard a large “CRACK” that echoed through the rock cliffs above. Rams sparring! Since I was in the timber, I couldn’t locate them. I quickened my pace to get through the timber to the next opening. I wanted to glass the far side of the canyon and the juicy cliff band I had eyeballed on the way up. As I was crossing a last section of scree and looking for a place to sit and glass, I heard another “CRACK”. Within a minute I had located the sparring rams. The rut wasn’t for a month, so this wasn’t a serious fight. One of the rams was younger, however, the other ram was older, much older, with thick horns. He also had a dark coat and pot belly. A nice ram, a very nice ram. I immediately tried ranging the ram. My hand was shaking so bad I couldn’t get a consistent number. I try to get the same distance three times to confirm. I couldn’t get the same range twice! The shot was going to be between 415 and 432 yards. I looked for ways to cut some distance.
One option was to creep right out in the scree that contained fewer and fewer trees. I could probably shave 75 yds off the shot; but at very high risk of being seen. I considered dropping back into the timber, but each step downhill increased the shot angle, decreasing the area for a fatal shot. Then I considered the ram. I knew he was good, but with a once-in-a-lifetime tag, was he good enough? Ten tags were issued for this unit, six rams had been taken. Would I come across another ram this good, and would it be in a position where I could make a play? While I was having this internal discussion, the rams bedded. The young ram bedded in the open, giving me very little chance of cutting the distance without being spotted. The larger ram bedded with the front half of his body behind a tree, giving me zero opportunity to study the horns. I’d have to wait. My internal discussion was nauseating. I went through my checklist: 1) “Would I kill this ram on the last day. Check.” 2) “Fat bases, long drops in the curls. Check.” 3) “Fit a softball in the curl. Check.” And 4) “Dark coat, big body. Check.”

I thought a lot about the unknowns if I passed on this ram: injury, weather, pressure. All unknowns that could hamper my ability to find another ram this nice. Also, I was about halfway through the 21 days allotted. It would seem to be enough time unless a front moved in. Fog and lack of visibility is a killer for a sheep hunt. The biggest factor in my mind was injury. My left knee was already the size of a softball. Two previous surgeries over the years exacerbated the effect of a hard twist on a wet rock early in the hunt. During my only other sheep hunt, on day four, my guide slipped on snowy, mossy scree during a climb, lacerating his left wrist down to the bone, five inches long. I could see the tendons, veins and bone in his wrist. He missed the ulnar artery by millimeters. Without either of us saying a word, we both knew the hunt was over. What if I injured myself before I could find a ram better than this?

I had practiced successfully out to 500 yards with my rifle. If I could create a steady enough rest on the steep scree, using the base of the tree I was hiding behind, I felt I could make a clean shot at the guesstimated 425 yds. While the rams were bedded, I put on insulation, stacked rocks and braced my pack. I tested the position multiple times, and the crosshairs were still. After about an hour, both rams stood and fed out to the right. I confirmed this was the ram and prepared for the shot. I settled in, clicked the safety off and squeezed the trigger. MISS!

A clean miss. The ram moved around in a circle and ended up back where he started. I quickly worked the bolt and steadied for a second shot. MISS! I worked the bolt again. The ram had moved about 25 yards and then stopped, trying to figure out what was happening. I rearranged and adjusted my turret. It was at that point that I had a very serious internal conversation: “Get your act together, you won’t get a 4th shot”; “Move the rock under your right elbow you were thinking about during the last shot”; “Pick a spot”; “Work through your shot process”; “Breath properly”; “Pick a damn spot”.

I squeezed the trigger for the third time. The ram lurched and fell over stone dead. He slid into softer dirt, towards the edge of a cliff band, stopping just short of going over the edge. A wave of emotions rippled through my mind in an instant. I thought of my brother. I know he was smiling and would have been so excited for my accomplishment. I couldn’t believe I had taken a ram, a longtime dream fulfilled! Due to the cross-canyon location and four points scramble up the cliff band, it took me an hour to get to the ram. He was beautiful. I couldn’t get over how incredible it was to get my hands on him. I had some deep moments thinking of Jason, having those same feelings when he took his rams.

The ram was very difficult to maneuver without rolling it off the cliff. Given how exposed I was, about ten feet from the edge of a 40-foot drop, I considered pushing him off for safety. My irrational side won out, I decided to keep him where he was for photos and dressing. A few hours later I had the ram broken down, head, cape, backstraps and tenderloins loaded. Boned quarters were hung in a shady alcove, in a dead tree, next to where he died. I would have to make two trips due to the terrain. After the shot, I had sent my buddy the location. On the way out, about a mile from the trailhead, I ran straight into my friend who had dropped everything to help with the pack out. Since it was later in the day, plus a cliff band to navigate, we decided to come back the following morning for the rest of the meat. Freezing temps would hold the meat perfectly.

An incredible experience from start to finish. One I wish I could relive every year. One I never expected to draw. A huge thanks to the Idaho Department of Fish and Game for providing the opportunity to hunt these incredible animals. I am hoping to get another chance to hunt sheep in my lifetime. But if I don’t, I know I experienced a once in a lifetime hunt!
Use an eye patch on your unused eye while looking through a spotting scope. This allows both eyes to track with each other and you don’t have to twist facial muscles to keep the other eye closed all the time. When glassing for long periods the eye patch will reduce glassing fatigue and eye strain.

Inexpensive eye patches are available at most pharmacies and usually come in packages of two. In the field I keep one looped onto the barrel of my spotting scope so it’s always handy.

It’s also a good prop for pirate jokes. Argh!

Bill London
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Mr Brown Bear hunt to Alaska began in 2019 by purchasing the hunt at an auction in Las Vegas. The hunt with Eli Lucas’ Coastal Hunting was originally lined up for April of 2020. However, due to the pandemic, the Alaska Brown Bear hunts were shut down for non-residents in 2020 and my hunt was re-scheduled for 2022. My friend James Ray also booked the same hunt, which was great as James and I had hunted together multiple times and have always enjoyed each other’s company.

We arrived in Juneau, Alaska on May 9 and the next day boarded a float plane to take us to Eli’s 50-foot boat, the Emlydon, which was anchored in a sheltered cove off Admiralty Island. Eli met us at the float plane and introduced us to guide Hunter Taylor. They loaded up our guns, gear and shuttled us to the boat. The Emlydon would be our base camp for the next eight days of hunting. It was so nice to come back to a warm comfortable place every evening and fall asleep with the boat rocking gently with the waves. We spent that afternoon organizing our gear and getting ready to begin our hunt the next evening.

On a typical day of hunting, we would awaken at 7-8 am, have breakfast, go over guns and gear, play some cards or read, and then have lunch. Shortly after lunch we would split up as a hunter and guide, with each pair going in a different direction to a different location. During the dates that we hunted, the low tide started about five pm and moved a little later each day. On the last day of the hunt the low tide was at about ten pm. It got dark around eleven pm, so the hunting conditions were ideal with the evening low tide occurring at dusk. After dark we would return to the Emlydon and have a light dinner and be in bed around mid-night or a little after. Eli always made sure that we were well fed, the food and cooking were excellent.

While hunting we motored along the shoreline in a sixteen-foot aluminum skiff, glassing the shoreline for bears that would be looking for feed on the beaches and rocks exposed by the low tide. We typically would stay about three quarters of a mile from shore. On the last night I went out with Hunter as my guide. We were hunting the same area where the large bear had given us the slip two nights ago. We saw a bear that we determined was a sow. Then we spotted another bear that we thought was worth a closer look. When we got closer to that bear, we determined he was a boar but not large enough. As we looked him over, we spotted another bear to the north, on the small grassy peninsula where we had seen the large boar two days earlier. We decided to go after this bear and beached the skiff about a mile from the bear in a little cove so that it was out of site. We would need to sneak down the beach and coastal rocks to get in position to get a shot at the bear. The only problem was the small bear was right in our line of travel and we would need to chase him off, hopefully without scaring the large bear. We were able to run that bear off in a direction away from the bear we were stalking. There was one point in our stalk where we would be seen by the bear if we were on the open beach so we detoured up into the timber so our
approach would be hidden from the bear. It was the first time I had been in the timber on the island, and I was impressed by the size of the old growth trees. There was also a lot of moss and downed moss-covered trees which created a very quiet and eerie setting, especially knowing this was home to the large Brown Bears.

Hunter and I managed to get within 200 yards of the bear by going through the timber. We very slowly snuck in close going through the Devil’s Club and Willow brush. We were able to use some Willow brush as cover and hid behind it as the bear fed in the grass toward us. Hunter put the shooting sticks up and I got the gun on them, but the bear was obscured by a dirt bank that had been deposited by the salmon stream that we were next to. Finally, the bear fed up onto the dirt bank giving me a clear broadside shot at 120 yards. The first shot hit him solidly and knocked him off his feet. After 4 more follow-up shots, (most probably were not necessary) I had my Alaska Brown Bear.

I was shooting a Remington 700 in 375 H&H Magnum with a Leupold scope and shooting 300 grain Barnes triple shock bullets. I was able to recover one of the bullets. As dark was approaching fast, we got the bear tagged, left some clothing on the bear in the hopes of discouraging other bears from chewing on the hide and carcass and made our way back to the skiff.

The next morning, we all got up early and headed back to the bear to get more pictures and skin the bear. We were glad to see that the bear was untouched by any other bears and in a matter of a few hours we were headed back to the Emeldon with the skull and cape.

The next two days James, Hunter, and Eli went out looking for a suitable bear. Unfortunately, they were never able to locate a large enough boar. That was the only negative part of this hunt. It would have been the perfect adventure if James had been able to connect on a bear, but we have hunted enough to know that things don’t always go as planned.

Over the course of this hunt we saw numerous porpoises, seals, humpback whales every day, and even a pod of killer whales one day. One evening while I was alone on the Emeldon I watched humpback whales’ breech and fin slap the water for at least thirty minutes. Alaska is such a majestic and beautiful state. I cannot say enough about good things about this hunt and the commitment of Eli and Hunter to provide an enjoyable hunting experience. I am looking forward hunting Alaska again someday.
Idaho bighorn sheep management has a lot going on and you are a part of it. The Idaho Fish and Game commission and the Idaho Dept of Fish & Game are making a concerted effort to expand bighorn management in Idaho. With input from interested parties, including the ID WSF, the IDFG has developed an Action Plan for addressing projects in multiple bighorn populations in Idaho.

Around the state some herds are increasing, some are stagnant, some are declining, and some we just don’t know. The Hells Canyon herd is increasing. Where will it expand to? The South Beaverhead and the Jim Sage herds, appear stagnant but we don’t have recent population estimates or health testing on these populations. Herds, appear stagnant but we don’t have recent population estimates or health testing on these populations. Around the state some herds are increasing, some are stagnant, some are declining, and some we just don’t know.

The projects included in the Action Plan are science driven, ambitious, and expensive, totaling over a half million dollars for this year alone. Funding these action plans is being shared by the following groups:

- $195,000 Idaho Dept of Fish & Game (Not including biologist’s time)
- $190,480 Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation
- $135,000 National Wild Sheep Foundation, Grant-In-Aid
- $39,308 Midwest Wild Sheep Foundation

Note: The Hells Canyon Initiative research is not included in the funding above. It’s part of long-term funding by IDFG, Oregon DFW, Washington DFW, WSF national, ID WSF, OR WSF, WA WSF, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) and Nez Perce Tribes, BLM, USFS.

Volunteers. There will be opportunities for ID WSF members to volunteer on some of these projects. For volunteer opportunities the ID WSF simply sends an email to all current members asking for volunteers. If your membership lapsed with the new year or your email address has changed, you won’t get the notification.

There will also be hundreds of collar kits to assemble and organize at the IDFG offices prior to field capture. After sheep are netgunned from a helicopter, they are either processed at the capture site or slung under a helicopter to a processing site. When processing sites are used volunteers can usually assist. During late summer lamb surveys volunteers would assist in locating collared ewes to see if their lambs survived the summer. You can also watch for any signs of coughing or sick sheep.

There will be volunteer opportunities for collar kit assembly then capture and collar efforts from the fall of 2022 through March of 2023. Most of the capture-collar will be happening in January and March of 2023. Ground surveys for lambs will be around August of 2023.

It should be noted that anytime a helicopter is involved, scheduling is difficult. Wildlife helicopter crews are specially trained and very in demand. So, a storm in Wyoming can cause an Idaho capture to be rescheduled. It may be clear at the capture site but fogged in where the helicopter is parked. Project dates are often in a state of flux and volunteers will often need to adjust their plans. To better understand the herd specific projects included in the Bighorn Sheep Action Plan, here’s a little background.

Movi. Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae (Movi) causes pneumonia and high mortalities in bighorn sheep, particularly lambs. When herds are initially infected with Movi, there is usually an all-age die off where, on average, about half the population dies. When a bighorn is infected with Movi it either dies, is sick and recovers, or appears to recover but in fact is still sick and spreading the disease. The chronically sick bighorn sheep continue to infect other bighorn sheep causing high lamb mortalities and low herd recruitment. Some populations can experience decades of low lamb recruitment with continued population declines or limited or no population increases.

Test and Remove. Test and Remove (T&R) is a process where sheep are captured, tested for Movi, collared, and released. Those that test positive for Movi are recaptured and retested. If they are again Movi positive, then they are considered chronically infected and are removed from the population.

They are either taken live to research facilities or euthanized and necropsied to gather additional data. The goal of removing individuals that are chronically infected with Movi is to increase populations by removing a major source of lamb mortality in the herd.

The success of Test and Remove Movi clearance in the Hells Canyon bighorn herds created an opportunity to expand what was learned there to improve bighorn populations in other areas. During the Hells Canyon research the goal was to test every adult female in free-ranging bighorn sheep populations. In other areas this goal would be unreasonable due to remoteness, terrain, wildlife restrictions on helicopter use, and funding. Exploring the ability to manage Movi on a large landscape without capturing every single animal could lead to better herd health and increasing populations in other bighorn ranges.

GPS/VHF Collars. Most of the collars used in these Action Plans have both Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) and Very High Frequency (VHF) transmitters.

Global Positioning Satellite (GPS) collars use satellite triangulation to determine the bighorn’s location. GPS transmitters download locations which IDFG can access every few days allowing remote monitoring of research animals. This allows study of habitat use, travel corridors, tracking social dynamics, and identifying lambing and wintering areas. GPS collars are more expensive, and their batteries don’t last as long as VHF, they also are subject to a monthly fee for satellite services. It’s like paying your InReach bill each month. The additional costs are balanced out because GPS collars...
require less personnel time to gather more data points of animal locations and can provide quicker mortality notifications than when animals are monitored by field personnel every few days or weeks.

Very High Frequency (VHF) transmitters send out a signal that when picked up by the receiver makes a ‘beep’ sound indicating the direction of the collar. VHF transmitters send a signal that in the field provides real time direction of the collar. The handheld four-pronged antennas attached to receivers are the ones you see in field pictures. VHF collars cannot be monitored remotely and require personnel using a receiver to be within a couple of miles of the collar. This work is done from the ground or using a plane.

Together a GPS/VHF collar allows for remote monitoring, quicker more accurate mortality necropsies, and field location of moving live animals. When conducting a lamb survey, the GPS information will tell where a collared ewe was yesterday. Once at that site the VHF signal will (hopefully) lead you to where the ewe and her lamb are now. VHF signals are subject to significant bounce in mountainous terrain which can make locating sheep a challenge.

Cause-specific mortality-Predation. Why did this animal die or what killed it? A field necropsy can establish the health of the animal, fat reserves, possible diseases, and if it died from predation then which predator killed it. There can also be combinations, it was weak from Movi when it was killed by a lion. It’s best when a field necropsy is completed within 48 hours otherwise scavenging and decomposition can make accurate analysis difficult. To accomplish this the more expensive collars with both GPS and VHF transmitters are used. When the collar does not move for more than 9 hours it sends a ‘mortality’ signal. Then an email to be sent to the IDFG saying that the collar is in mortality mode and its location with GPS coordinates. It’s usually a Wildlife Technician who does the field necropsy and retrieves the collar. That’s why ‘Tech Time’ is budgeted in for some projects in the Action Plan. Documented causes of big game mortality have been winter kill, malnutrition, accidents, lions, coyotes, wolves, bears, bobcat, and eagles.

Population Management Units. In Idaho’s hunting regulations, the state is divided into Game Management Units (GMUs). Bighorn populations are managed by herd or meta-populations in Population Management Units (PMUs).

Idaho state fiscal year. The Idaho state fiscal year runs from July 1-June 30, so these plans are for fiscal year 2022/23.

Reproduction = how many are born.

Recruitment = how many live to sexual maturity (yearlings for bighorn sheep)
This collaborative project designed as a manipulative experiment that builds on and improves previous Test and Remove (T&R) Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae (Movi) clearance efforts. We are using adaptive methods to identify the least invasive, most efficient approaches to clearing Movi from six free-ranging bighorn sheep populations in Idaho (Lower Panther Main Salmon PMU), Oregon (Lookout, Burnt River and Lostine), and Washington (Yakima). These six focal populations represent a range of health and demographic histories (size, native vs reintroduced, etc.), patterns of space use, infection, and accessibility. This is an ongoing project and this would be the second year of capture in the Lower Panther Main Salmon PMU.

The first T&R experiments aimed to test every adult female, or every adult of both sexes in free-ranging bighorn sheep populations to identify and remove chronic Movi carriers as a proof of concept. The approach here is to strategically reduce infection pressure, as opposed to testing every animal. This change is based on experience gained from T&R in Hells Canyon. By taking advantage of knowledge about the space use, connectivity, and Movi shedding duration and prevalence within each population to characterize transmission dynamics and identify Movi “hot spots,” we hope we can stop the chain of transmission and that Movi will be cleared from the population through a combination of selective removals and natural attrition.

The Lower Panther Main Salmon PMU is a priority for management because this population of native sheep has similar history/issues and can be used as a study area in the T&R project like the Lower Salmon. There is a need for management data in this PMU including habitat use and movements. This data will inform season setting and provide data for land management agencies (i.e. mining proposals).

Methods

After the initial year of testing, we are focusing on those subgroups that have been identified as having the greatest prevalence of Movi shedding. Individuals that are positive will be retested the next year to distinguish chronic from intermittent carriers. Testing will occur over at least three years and removals will occur in years two and/or three following positive tests over two years. If necessary, we will extend the project as conditions dictate. This will be year 2 of capture and testing in the Lower Panther Main Salmon PMU.

Budget (IDFG, ID WSF, WSF, Midwest WSF)

- Collars: 75 @ $1200 = $90,000
- Helicopter Capture: 55 sheep @ $1000 = $55,000
- Ground Capture: 20 @ $200 = $4,000
- Tech time (contract): $8,000
- Health Testing: 75 @ $100 = $7,500
- Necropsy (testing): $2,000
- 2022-23 Budget total: $166,500
This is a collaborative project designed as a manipulative experiment that builds on and improves previous Test and Remove (T&R) Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae (Movi) clearance efforts. We are using adaptive methods to identify the least invasive, most efficient approaches to clearing Movi from six free-ranging bighorn sheep populations in Idaho (Lower Salmon and Lower Panther Main Salmon PMUs), Oregon (Lookout, Burnt River and Lostine), and Washington (Yakima). These six focal populations represent a range of health and demographic histories (size, native vs reintroduced, etc.), patterns of space use, infection, and accessibility. This is an ongoing project, and this would be the third year of capture in the Lower Salmon Population Management Unit (PMU).

The Lower Salmon PMU is a priority for management due to its potential connectivity to the North Hells Canyon PMU. There are bighorns from both areas (genetic analysis) moving to habitat between the PMUs. We are concerned that the Lower Salmon bighorn sheep could re-infect Hells Canyon. The Lower Salmon bighorn sheep is also a native population with significant value to the state and species as a whole.

Methods

After the initial years of testing, we will be focusing on those subgroups that have been identified as having the greatest prevalence of Movi shedding. Individuals that are positive will be retested the next year to distinguish chronic from intermittent carriers. Testing will occur over at least three years and removals will occur in years two and/or three following positive tests over two years. If necessary, we will extend the project as conditions dictate. This will be year 3 of capture and testing in the Lower Salmon PMU. However, because of issues dealing with wilderries and the use of helicopters to capture bighorn sheep, the total number of sheep captured from jet boats is less than what we had hoped going into year 3. We hope to deploy more collars in this PMU this field season.

Budget (IDFG, ID WSF, WSF, Midwest WSF)

- Collars: 20 @ $1200 = $24,000 + others = $33,000
- Helicopter Capture: 25 sheep @ $1000 = $25,000
- Jet Boat (ground capture) = $6,000
- Health Testing: 40 @ $100 = $4,000
- Necropsy (testing): $2,000

2022-23 Budget total: $70,000
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-Randy Newberg, Host of Fresh Tracks

BIGHORN MANAGEMENT PLAN

ISSUE

California bighorn sheep were released into Jacks Creek several times starting in 1967 after native sheep were extirpated in the early 1900s. The population grew to a high count of 360 animals with a lamb:ewe ratio of 29:100 observed during a helicopter survey in 1993. Following 1993, the number of bighorn sheep began to decline and the most recent survey in 2021 found 139 bighorn sheep with a lamb:ewe ratio of 30:100. Causes of decline are unknown. Bighorn sheep are known to cross the state boundary between Oregon and Idaho along the Owyhee Front towards Jacks Creek. In 2015, Leslie Gulch, Oregon on the western side of the Owyhee Front PMU suffered a severe pneumonia outbreak and has not recovered. Predation by mountain lions has been documented as a limiting factor in some bighorn sheep populations elsewhere in their range but long-term and current cause-specific mortality data is not available for these PMUs. Oregon is also in the early stages of developing a plan to address concerns in sheep populations along the Oregon/Idaho border near Leslie Gulch.

METHODS

Capture, radio collar, and health test 30 adult bighorn sheep in the Jacks Creek PMU and 10 in the Owyhee Front PMU (place approximately 30% of the total number of collars on rams). Use these radio-marked animals to document seasonal movements (pathways and timing), habitat use, cause-specific mortality, and disease status. Use data to formulate management actions to mitigate disease risk, refine habitat modeling, address any cause-specific mortality issues, and improve population monitoring. We will also monitor neonate and fall lamb survival.

BUDGET (IDFG, ID WSF, WSF)

- Collars: 40 @ $1200 = $48,000
- Helicopter Capture: 40 sheep @ $1000 = $40,000
- Tech time (contract 2 mo) = $8,000
- Health Testing: 40 @ $100 = $4,000
- Necropsy (testing): $2,000
- 2022-23 Budget total: $102,000
In 2017 a hunter reported seeing two rams with thick nasal discharge. He harvested one of the rams and it subsequently tested positive for Movi. Movi has been documented in harvested rams every year since 2017. Ram hunting permits were reduced from 5 to 2 in 2019 and reduced further to 1 permit in 2021 due to declining sheep numbers seen on aerial surveys, increasing age of harvested rams, and interviews with hunters. Only 26 sheep were observed on the most recent aerial survey in June 2021, however the hunter estimated the population closer to 60 sheep. In 2022 the hunt was closed due to low numbers of sheep.

**Methods**

Survey the population to obtain location data and estimate total numbers and ratios of ewes, rams, and lambs. Change the timing of the survey to be conducted during the fall rut to better our chances of locating rams and ewes.

**Budget (ID WSF)**

- Helicopter survey (rut): $15,000
- 2022-23 Budget total: $15,000
Anecdotal information from locals in the area suggest that at some time in the mid-1980s there were somewhere between 60–80 bighorn sheep in this area. These numbers were likely a result of the translocations between 1976 and 1982. Since the early 2000s this population has remained around the 20–25 mark with a noticeable increase to about 41 individuals around 2010. These observations were quickly followed by a reduction down to 17 documented individuals in 2016. Counts in this population have generally been incidental to aerial surveys for other big game species. Currently the population is estimated at 30 bighorn sheep. Movi was suspected as the reason this population declined in 2016 and potentially why the population has not recovered. There have been no recent population estimates or health testing in this population.

**Methods**

Prior to capture, survey the population to obtain location data and estimate total numbers and ratios of ewes, rams, and lambs. Capture, radio collar, and health test all adult and yearling bighorn sheep in the South Beaverhead PMU (~30). The objective of this study is to determine the presence and prevalence of Movi in this population. All bighorn sheep identified as chronic carriers of Movi (test positive during initial capture and subsequent recapture) will be lethally removed from the population, rendering the remaining population free of Movi. Additionally, we will document seasonal movements (pathways and timing), habitat use, fall lamb survival, and cause-specific mortality. We plan to use this data to formulate management actions to mitigate disease risk, refine habitat modeling, address any cause-specific mortality issues, and improve population monitoring.

**Budget (IDFG, ID WSF)**

- Collars: 30 @ $1200 = $36,000
- Helicopter Capture: 30 sheep @ $1000 = $30,000
- Health Testing: 30 @ $100 = $3,000
- Necropsy (testing): $2,000
- Helicopter survey (pre-capture): $10,000
- 2022-23 Budget total: $81,000
Issue

One of the keys to maintaining a wild sheep population on Jim Sage Mountain is minimizing contact with domestic sheep. Since approximately 2016, IDFG has received intermittent, unsubstantiated reports of bighorn rams in the Raft River Mountains of Utah. In 2020, Magic Valley IDFG staff were contacted by Utah Division of Wildlife regarding a small band of bighorn rams (~8) that had been documented on USFS lands in the Raft River Mountains. These sheep are thought to be rams on summer forays from Jim Sage. Domestic sheep grazing is permitted in the Raft River Mountains and the potential for contact is a concern for managers.

Methods

Capture, radio collar, and health test up to 10 rams and 5 ewes on Jim Sage Mountain to document seasonal movements (pathways and timing), habitat use, cause-specific mortality, and disease status. Use data to formulate management actions to mitigate disease risk, refine habitat modeling, address any cause-specific mortality issues, and improve population monitoring.

Budget (IDFG, ID WSF)

- Collars: 15 @ $1200 = $18,000
- Helicopter Capture: 15 sheep @ $1000 = $15,000
- Health Testing: 15 @ $100 = $1,500
- Necropsy (testing): $1,000
- 2022-23 Budget total: $35,500
Continue to monitor and maintain a sample of radio-collared bighorn sheep in Hells Canyon to gain better information on population performance, habitat use, and movements post Movi clearance. Thirty-five collars will be deployed on adult females, males, and 8 – 10 month old lambs in GMU’s 11 and 13. Ground and aerial monitoring will be conducted to determine productivity, cause-specific survival, population abundance and composition. This information will be important to help us predict movements and changes to habitat use in healthy, growing populations of bighorn sheep.

This is a collaborative effort involving state wildlife agencies in Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, WSF national and chapters, CTUIR and Nez Perce Tribes, BLM, FS, and others.

Budget: IDFG, Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, WSF national, ID WSF, OR WSF, WA WSF, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) and Nez Perce Tribes, BLM, USFS, and others.
Continue working on clearing Movi from small flocks of domestic sheep and herds of domestic goats. This project includes working to educate the owners of domestic sheep and goats as well as other members of the community about bighorn sheep and the risk of disease transmission from domestic sheep and goats. Efforts would continue in the Hells Canyon area, Challis, Salmon, and Mackay. IDFG currently collaborates on these projects with the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation and other WSF chapters, owners of domestic sheep and goats, extension offices, Asotin Conservation District, universities, and others.

Budget: (IDFG, ID WSF)
- Testing and temporary/contract employees: $70,000
THE MISSION
The mission of Idaho Wild Sheep is to enhance wild sheep populations in Idaho, and with partners in adjacent states, for public enjoyment, education, and fair chase hunting; to promote professional wildlife management, and protect sportsmen’s rights.

HISTORY
The Idaho Wild Sheep was founded in 1982 by two dozen concerned sportsmen who wanted to “put more bighorns on Idaho’s mountains.” From that core group, many of which are still very active on our board and committees, we have grown to a thriving organization with more than 800 committed members.

REACH
- 800 Members
- 8,500 Social Media
- 700+ in attendance at Banquet
- Magazine mailed to 1,000
- NEW Donor & Sponsor directory listing on website
- Banquet donors and sponsors are listed in banquet program and slide show
- Exhibitor opportunities available
- Items and banners displayed at banquet

MERCHANTISE ACCEPTED
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Partners: Kifaru, Sitka, Han Wag Boots, YETI, Korbin's Archery
Aizlee Jenkins (13), lives in Rawlins, Wyoming. She shot a good 3-point mule deer buck, her first big game animal, in October 2021. She wanted to hunt pronghorn antelope in 2022 and practiced shooting her Savage 243 to be as prepared as possible. Her mom, Aliesha, and Grandma Jean decided to join in on the fun and make it a memorable 3-generation ladies hunting adventure. All three submitted applications to the Wyoming Game & Fish Department in April 2022, and all were successful in drawing tags that would enable them to hunt south of Gillette, near the town of Wright, Wyoming. Rancher friend, Jackie Dobrenz, would be their guide, making this truly an all-girls hunting adventure. Dad, Seth Jenkins, and Grandpa Scot Jenkins would be allowed to tag along as observers and support crew.

Anticipations ran high as the hunt date approached. We drove from Rawlins to Wright on October 7, 2022. The Dobrenz ranch house would be our base camp; the accommodations were very comfortable. After a hearty breakfast, we ventured out to find Aizlee a good antelope buck as she was the designated first shooter. The antelope rut was winding down, however, the bucks were reluctant to let the party end. Many of the bucks were mostly interested in keeping their does bunched up and separated from other groups of does and rival bucks. Being preoccupied and distracted, the bucks generally did not pay much attention to the stealthy camouflaged hunters. After looking over several potential shooter bucks, Aizlee liked one particular buck that had heavy mass in his horns and carried that mass up beyond where most prongs or “cutters” would typically branch off. This buck did not have prominent prongs, but his heavy mass made him unique and interesting. Aizlee got set up for her shot, a distance of 125 yards, with her rifle resting steady over her dad’s backpack. Her first shot was a solid hit, but since the buck remained on his feet, she put a final round in him. Well done young lady! We took time to complete a good photo session to capture the memories of her first pronghorn antelope buck.

Next up was mom, Aliesha. We looked over a number of bucks trying to find one worthy of her tag. When we located the buck Aliesha wanted, we had difficulty preparing for the shot. His does were nervous and kept moving, with him following along. After several “almost” opportunities, it looked like he might finally remain still long enough for a clean shot. Wrong! Just as Aliesha completed a gentle squeeze of her trigger, the buck stepped forward and the shot wounded him. Two follow up shots later Aliesha’s photo session commenced.

After gutting and loading the two fine bucks taken by daughter and mom, guide Jackie suggested we take those two bucks back to the ranch house to hang in the shop cooler. Also, we could possibly grab a bite of lunch. However, on the drive back, we spotted another very good buck with a large group of does. This buck was having a tough job keeping his does together; running hard andimitating the work of a skilled cow dog or cutting horse. We captured some interesting video of his skillful moves; moves that would make any experienced football running back envious. We kept track of this good buck and his harem while they crossed a fence line onto property where we had permission hunt. Jackie had a good knowledge of all the bucks that often lived on their extensive ranching properties, however, she did not remember seeing this particular buck before. We moved cautiously into position. When the buck paused long enough, Jean made a good shot, resting over a backpack. After a second shot the buck was hers! Jean’s buck was the prototype near-perfect antelope buck. He had good mass, impressive prong length, nice long graceful hooks and perfect symmetry. Jackie later confided that Jean’s buck might have been the best antelope buck to be taken on their ranch the entire season; we were the final group of hunters.

In a roadside diner in Wright, Wyoming there is a sign entitled “Rules of Hunting Camp”. One of the many comical rules listed: stated: “The least experienced hunter will always get the biggest animal” . Grandma Jean insists that the words “least experienced” are obviously wrong and should more accurately be replaced by “most patient”. Since all three of the lady’s bucks were available at hunt’s end, we were fortunate to have the opportunity to position them for some good memorable group photos. Thanks to Jackie’s guiding skills and some good shooting by the Jenkins’ ladies, our Girls Gone Hunting adventure in Wyoming worked out as well as could possibly be expected.
At the past banquet, in collaboration with the National chapters woman hunt program and Idaho fish and game, we conducted a survey for women about what they find to be the limiting and/or daunting factors holding them back from getting into and feeling more comfortable with hunting. We were fortunate enough to have a good amount of participation and were able to narrow it down to a few different factors. One of which is that women and/or new hunters do not feel comfortable handling firearms and are unsure of how to go about getting the proper instruction.

This past summer The Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation hosted an introductory shooting clinic at Blacks Creek Range. While the survey was focused on women, the course was opened up to new hunters and youth as well. The course was instructed by local trained professionals, Sarah and Dennis Van Acker. Sarah is an instructor at Independence Indoor Shooting Range and Dennis is a long-range shooting instructor who teaches across multiple western states. They were gracious enough to volunteer their Saturday afternoon to teach the group of folks who came out to learn about proper firearm handling and shooting techniques. The course started with a 1.5 hours of classroom time where Sarah and Dennis went over the basics of firearms, how they operate, proper handling, and of course, safety. Following that, the attendees had another 1.5 hours on the range where they were able to put to work what they had learned in the classroom. It was great to be able to watch as those who previously were unsure about handling a rifle become more proficient and confident in functioning the weapon.

For Idaho WSF, this was the first educational class hosted in a number of years and were happy to have a good turnout. The course went well, and we learned about how we can make the next one even better. We encourage folks to reach out if they have any ideas about future courses or how to improve. As new opportunities arise, we will make sure to inform our membership.
A Dream and A Nightmare

By Colten Gilbert

August of 2020 I was walking off the mountain, with a California Bighorn Sheep in my pack, finishing a successful hunt with Dad and two of my brothers. As I hiked, I said out loud that it would not be my last day of sheep hunting. So began the amazing amount of physical preparation, saving, planning, sifting through outfitters, and a fair bit of overthinking to get ready for the hunt of a lifetime.

I had heard of Alaska Guide Service operated by George Bock and Ron Warren through a friend who spoke highly of them. So, I called and asked them a lot of rookie questions I’m sure, but eventually booked my hunt for 2023. One slow January day, while lying in a goose hunting blind, George called and asked if I would like to move my hunt to 2022 due to a cancellation. I was excited to say yes.

Summer passed by slowly and finally the day came to fly to Alaska and then Matthews Pass, a fair bit of overthinking to get ready for the hunt of a lifetime. I woke up in the morning to heavy rain on the tent wall. I wasn’t surprised and had even planned on the weather but the anticipation of getting out and hunting was building. For me, this was most likely a once in a lifetime hunt! What felt like hours was probably only one. When the rain stopped, we were able to strap our packs on and start up the long, glaciated valley. The terrain was rugged.

We crossed a glacier that had crevices in the ice that could have handled a Peterbilt with a trailer attached. Some holes were not quite that big but if you somehow managed to slip you most likely would never be coming back out.

Four and a half hours past and I had already had the thought in my head that we would need to leave these rams for the night and make a play in the morning. I was enjoying watching the rams and trying to take it all in when George looked at me and whispered something I’ll never forget. “We are going to kill that ram tonight.” Instantly my heart was racing, and I knew that at the least we would stay there at our glassing knob until dark. He was confident that those rams would eventually feed down off their high perch above the valley and it turned out he was right.

At this point it was roughly 7:30 pm. A couple young rams stood up first and started their slow march down the steep shale. Over the next hour one by one the remainder of the herd followed suit. However, the three stubborn old rams remained bedded. It was as if Brutus was taunting me. Slowly turning his head back and forth as if to say, “come and get me!” Then Pretty Boy stood up and gave Brutus a nudge, they were finally on the move!

Forty-five exciting but nerve-racking minutes passed as the three rams slowly fed downhill. On their march down the hill Brutus and Curly put on a show as they smashed their horns together and in general beat up on each other like a couple of brothers. They fed out of the mountain, with a Califor-
was a bit of everything, broomed on his right side, carried everything hurriedly in my backpack and skied down. I had come true on a spot nicknamed ‘nightmare’. I packed it had just been a lot of miles, but really only two full days of hunting. I shot my ram just 30 minutes before dawn which meant we had a long trek back down the glacier to our spike camp in the dark. With heavy packs and headlamps, we started the journey back to camp as it started to steadily rain.

It seemed as if when I pulled the trigger that the gates holding back the rain were opened. The ice we walked on became slick and the darkness made it difficult to navigate. We wove in and out of the large cuts in the ice turning off our head lamps periodically to somewhat see the mountain and gauge where we were on the glacier. Finally, around 2 am we reached our tents and climbed into sleeping bags for a short night. In the morning we woke up to one of the strongest windstorms I have ever experienced. At times I felt like I needed to help support the tent or it would collapse. After a few hours we climbed out of tents and carefully worked together to take them down, and pack up the entirety of camp, meat, cape, and horns. With even heavier packs we started what turned out to be a two-day pack out back to base camp. All the while the wind blew, and the rain fell!

Things had gone so smoothly on my sheep hunt that we had several days in base camp until I was to fly home. George had recommended I grab a grizzly tag in Fairbanks due to the numbers of bears seen this year. I figured I would just be giving that locking tag a ride around in my pocket but what happened two days later was the icing on the cake!

The next morning, we headed back up the tundra hill. I found where I had shot from as well as my brass casings. We watched the video again and realized we were much too high on the hill the night before and went to where the bear had actually gone over the hill. It didn’t take long to see tracks penetrating the tundra! We moved another 25 yards downhill and there he was! He had only run about 75 yards! All three of us couldn’t help but exchange some high fives and cheers. This hunt had truly turned into a hunt of a lifetime.

I am beyond grateful for the experience I had, I feel truly blessed. I am an average guy but there was nothing average about this hunt! I truly couldn’t have made this dream happen without the support of my wife Abby. She is my greatest motivation in life and always helps me work towards my goals and keeps things moving back home while I am off on adventures.

There are so many I need to thank but one would be the late Ken Jafek. Ken was one of the passionate outdoorsmen that were early Life Members (#22) of what is now known as the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation. He was a mentor of mine on my first sheep hunt and taught me a lot about bighorn sheep. Two days before Ken passed, he called me out of the blue and gave me some extremely valuable advice.

Don’t you dare wait.

-Ken Jafek
me some advice. Ken explained to me that when he was my age, he had missed a chance to go hunt stone sheep for what would have been “dirt cheap.” He had heard that I was thinking of going on a Dall hunt. He told me “Don’t you dare wait. You better go while you’re young.” You can bet those words have rung in my ears ever since.
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The Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation awarded scholarships for three youth to attend the Idaho Conservation Officers Association, 2022 Mark Hill Memorial Youth Conservation Camp in August of this year. Campers learn outdoor skills, become Certified in Hunter Education, and experience a wide variety of fun, outdoor activities.

These scholarships were made possible by the Lloyd Oldenburg Scholarship Fund.

Lloyd Oldenburg was a U.S. Air Force Korean War veteran and received Bachelor’s and Masters Degrees in Wildlife Management from South Dakota State University. He was a research biologist and regional wildlife manager for South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks where he assisted in bighorn transplanting to the Slim Buttes. He was a biologist for North Dakota Game and Fish Dept. where he participated in California bighorn transplants in that state. Lloyd worked for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game as a statewide Wildlife Research and State Wildlife Manager until his retirement in 1996. His interest and knowledge of bighorn sheep continued after his retirement where he worked for many years on the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation board of directors to expand cooperative projects such as the Hells Canyon Initiative.

From the camper’s:

Cooper Matlack - Thank you for the opportunity to go to the Idaho Conservation Officer Association Youth Camp. The camp was a great experience and my favorite part was shooting the guns it helped me a lot. I received my hunters education certificate and plan on hunting deer this November.

Brayton Haskell - My time at ICOA was very fun and educating. The camp staff was very welcoming and helped you if you needed anything. We learned a lot while having fun at the same time. The team leaders taught us about gun safety and how to identify different animals. We got to handle several different weapons. We did zip lining, tubing, and shed hunting. I left camp with my hunters education certification.

Hunter Bergin - Thank you for giving me an opportunity to go to the kids youth hunting camp. At the camp we got to learn about guns and safety. We got to go rafting, shooting and got to play games. My favorite part was shooting the muzzleloader. The cabins were very nice and all of the kids in my cabin were fun to play with. The counselors were very kind and made everything fun. Thank you for giving the chance to be at that camp. I hope you keep this camp going for other kids to attend.

*The 2023 camp will be held August 7-11th. Contact the office if you have interest.
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I n 1995 I had been the ballistics staff writer for Precision Shooting (PS) Magazine for 3 years. My editor was aware that my wife Leanne and I had, in previous years, conducted extensive performance tests on a good number of the then available hunting bullets. I was therefore assigned the task of writing a treatise on our research. A note about my editor is appropiate at this point. PS was then the oldest gun/shooting magazine in the U.S., and the editor/CEO would not accept ads from major firearms firms not from ammunition manufacturers. This kept us on the straight and narrow path of the unadulterated truth. Due to the present day proliferation of premium bullets some of these data may seem to be out of date, but I assure you the ballistic science of yesteryear is still very much applicable for today’s brothers and sisters of the gun. This report is not intended to challenge anyone’s preference for a particular type of bullet. If it works use it. The following is based on 100% empirical research which was conducted over a 50 year period.

This treatise was written with Joe/average hunter in mind; therefore mathematical formulas and other such gobbledygook have been kept to a minimum.

Circa 1970, Little Belt Mountains, Montana. “Just ease up there next to that oleraggedy snag and get a good rest. That’s a really good bull and we don’t want to mess things up.” “Okay,” was all I could manage to squeal out. As commanded, I slithered up on the designated spot next to the dead tree. I dared not take a peek at the biggest elk I had ever seen, lest my already pounding heart might jump completely out of my chest. It was the perfect setup, a solid rest, no wind and the huge wafting of the cool mountain air was wide side at about 280 yards. Life doesn’t get no better’n this.

The bull was so preoccupied with having considerable harassers that he didn’t even look my direction. Cross hairs on the massive chest, deep breath, slow squeeze, the rear disengaging and the ignition of the 60 grains of powder were as smooth as glass. The bullet thump was loud and clear as the great animal collapsed in his tracks. Jubilation exploded as all the participants, guide, wrangler and shooter jumped about shouting and slapping backs. “Hey, what the Sam hell’s going on,” says the guide. “That son of a gun got up.” “Oh yea sure,” sarcastically, “how many rounds did you have to fire before you got this perfectly mushroomed example?” Note: He rarely complained about the accuracy of said projectiles.

The truth of the matter is most of the bullets tested in the 1970s proved to be totally unacceptable rubbish. If the tested projectile passed the prescribed penetration test it invariably failed the meat and bone ordeal. Conversely, if it performed satisfactorily on the impact/weight retention test you probably couldn’t keep it on a pie plate at 200 yards. The criteria for these tests were quite simple. All bullets were first tested for accuracy. Passing score on this phase was a three shot group from 100 yards, wherein all 3 shots must fall within 1.25 inches. All projectiles were of the same caliber and weight and fired from the same rifle. If the bullet did not pass this first test it was in most cases discarded for further testing. The weight retention penetration tests were also quite simple, and not overly stringent. They were, however, extremely time consuming. Three shots were fired for each bullet type. The shots were all fired into a three foot thick mass of wet sawdust and phone books. At the front of this arrangement there were several steel bones which were covered with animal hides. To be a qualifying shot it was required that each bullet penetrate one of the steel bones and the animal hide plus penetrate 12 inches into the goozy mass. The final requisite was for it to retain 75% of its original mass. “Piece of cake,” said the gun slick magazines with their pretty colored photos.

During this testing project, the high overall accuracy performer was the Sierra Boat Tail. The winner of the impact/penetration/weight retention was the Nosler Partition. Both of these winners, however, failed to impress us on the flip side test. Keep in mind that when this took place sheep tags were sold over the counter and Richard Nixon was president of the USA.

Choosing the lesser of the two projectile evils, I continued for the next half of a decade to hunt with whatever was the most accurate in my well worn .270. During this period, I was so fearful of “blow ups,” that I down loaded the cartridges a bit and took only broadside heart, lung shots. I actually got away with this less than efficient method, for a number of years, but of course, I had to pass up some rather nice trophies that didn’t want to cooperate with the full broadside pose.

Serious hunters have been facing this bullet selection dilemma since the first copper clad, lead centered, projectile broke the Mach II barrier. In 1962, it was spelled out quite succinctly by the American gunsmithing and ballistics maestro, P.O. Ackley, in his 1962 great book, “Handbook for Shooters and Reloaders.” Here in he profoundly stated:

“There has been practically no progress made in the construction of bullets since the introduction of the present jacketed type which consists of a copper or copper alloy jacket and a lead core. This type of bullet seems to be well suited to velocities between 2000 and 2500 foot seconds, and will give fairly reliable results within this velocity range, but at lower velocities such bullets do not open up reliably and at high velocity they have a tendency to shred their jacket and disintegrate their lead core. As the velocity increases this tendency is geometrically magnified until a point is reached wherein the bullet will actually fly apart in the air en route to its target.

Maestro Ackley had a very low tolerance for the popular multi-color, high resolution bullet photon found in the “gun slick mags” of the day. He often quenched the authors of these pieces, “how many rounds did you have to fire before you got this perfectly mushroomed example?” Note: He rarely complained about the accuracy of said projectiles.

The great world bullet renaissance took place in the middle 80s, and my own personal bullet epiphany took place a good bit thereafter. During a two week hunt in November of 1983 I witnessed a pretty sorry bullet performance from several bullet types that were used on 3 different species of medium sized game. The bullet availabil- ity at that time wasn’t much more impressive than it had been several years previous. There were several of the new “custom” high grade bullets emerging into the market, but they weren’t readily available.
After two days of shooting and digging, the Ballistic Tip was the overall accuracy winner and the Barnes X was the weight and penetration champion. The Trophy Bonded B.C. was second in both categories, making it the best bet for all around use. This bullet was, during that period, made by hand in a very small shop in Dallas, Texas. Jack Carson, the originator of the TBBC was then quite ill and there was a huge squabble as to who had the manufacturing rights. This resulted in these great bullets being almost impossibly to obtain. These bullets are now being mass produced by Speer Bullet Co., Lewiston, Idaho, but are they as good as the same in yesteryear? I don’t know.

In the mid-90s Leanne and I had an African plains game hunt scheduled with Shi Avela Safaris and we were in a quandary as to what bullet we wanted to use. I wasn’t at all excited about the projectiles then available, but I was so completely enamored with the one hole performance of the B.T.’s that I just had to try them in the field. This probably wasn’t all that wise, but as world famous writer and champion bench rest shooter, Warren Page, profusely stated in his 1972 book, “only accurate rifles are interesting.”

One year later, “my goodness, that’s a rather nice kudu, I think we should right well give him a bash” whispered my friend and African PH, Ken Ball. Slowly we worked our way around a cluster of Acacias to get a better look. Our Kudu, however, hadn’t grown those wonderful 55 plus inch spirals by being stupid, so when we got in position for a better look, nary a hair did we see “that’s a really good bull” says Ken, “I think I’ll slip around the far side of that patch of thorn and see if I can push him out your way.” I love it when great plans actually work. Ten minutes after Ken hit the bush all hell broke loose. Without warning, what appeared at 150 yards to be a grey and white hairy bux, shot out of the scrub. As quickly as he appeared, so did he now slam to a halt and look back at the object of his irritation. I quickly threw up my .280 Ackley and immediately found him in the scope. I had a great view of a point stuck in front of his shoulder and all the way to his nose, nothing else was visible. I have never been one to advocate deliberate neck shots, but this seemed like a gimmie. Later that day I was still severely admonishing myself (read, banging my head on a tree). We were to learn my lesson by the rocky road of real life experience! The shot was on the bullseye, the bullet, however, according to my tracker and PH appeared to only open a flesh wound on the animals thick neck. Six hours and a lot of misery after the shot we found him about a half mile from where he was first encountered.

By the time I was back on the big jet heading north, I had made yet two more vows of things never to do again. (1.) Never, but ever would I again shoot another of God’s creatures in the neck and (2) If I were ever stupid enough to break the promise of #1, it was going to damn sure be with a better bullet than that which I was presently shooting.

Leanne had previously promised that if I ever proposed another bullet test she was going to mamme me… for life, but about a week after my nine time zone, jet lag recovery, she relented and we were again putting the pieces together for one more test. This test cost me a complete remodel of the kitchen including stove and refrigerator. After two days of shoot a few then dig and scrape a bunch, the Barnes X was the clear cut bone smasher, the A Frame was pretty well as did the Woodleigh and Scirocco. The number one tight grouper was the Scirocco.

Over the next four years, I alternated between the Scirocco and the Barnes. I used the Scirocco for most everything in North America and the Barnes for everything in Africa. Using this system I successfully engaged a fairly diverse group of both cervids and bovids on both continents. This included several North American wild sheep, plus elk, baldfo and elephant. (Note the Elephant tests were conducted on dead animals).

Even though this scheme seemed to work, I never was completely happy with the two bullet arrangement. Deep down I still wanted that one bullet for everything from coyotes to buffalo, but every time I would dig out the catalog and ballistic charts, Leanne would immediately pipe in with “Don’t even think about it! I had one hellish time convincing my live gun partner of 55 years not to leave home, “just one more test… I promise!!”

In this final, never to be repeated bullet screening to end all such tests, we gathered up every hunting bullet for sale in the U.S.

The Grand Champions were

** Barnes TTSX **
Best 3 shot group - 404 inches
Weight retention 95%

** Swift Sirocco **
Best 3 shot group - 469 inches
Weight retention 75-85%

** Nosler Accubond **
Best 3 shot group - 475 inches
Weight Retention 75-85%

Accuracy note: Although not a contender in the weight retention test, the Sierra Match King Consistently shot .260 groups in the accuracy test. There were many more bullets tested, but I see no reason to publish the failures.

Over the years I have been asked many times, what are the basic criteria for a hunting projectile to be consistently lethal on game? After 50 years of doing our own testing plus collaborating with several bullet manufacturers I have come to the following simple recommendation as to the lethality of rifle fired missiles that are to be used on plains and mountain ungulates.

** Recommended minimums for animals weighing 500 lbs or less:**
- Weight unfired - 150 grains
- Weight retention after impact - 70%
- Bullet diameter after impact - .30 inches
- Impact velocity at 300 yds - 1850 fps

As any true ballistic scientist will tell you kinetic energy has very little importance when assessing the lethality of a particular load. Momentum value is much more important. Both of the above examples of lethality have approximately 40 lbs of momentum at 300 yds.

It goes quite without saying, that there are now a multitude of great projectiles out there. Ammunition companies are spending millions of dollars to perfect that 100% retention bullet, missile, but as of this moment my own personal obsessive compulsive quest is at long last satisfied and I would be perfectly happy if I had to shoot any one of these beautiful projectiles for the rest of my hunting career, but as my wife, granddaughter Ashlei and I have collectively taken over 350 ungulates with the TTSX, without a failure, I think we will stick with them.

Bio data: Edd, Leanne and Ashlei are all IDWSF life members. Edd and Leanne have been competitive rifle, pistol and shotgun shooters for 45 years. Leanne has won the International 3 gun championships twice and been runner up once. She has also won pistol and rifle state championships in California, Florida, Idaho, Nevada, Texas and Washington.

Pamwe Chete

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** Accuracy note: **
- Weight retaining after impact - 70%
- Bullet diameter after impact - .30 inches
- Impact velocity at 300 yds - 1850 fps
Burk Mantel grew up in Vermont and moved to Colorado in 1973 to be regional manager for an oil company. While in Colorado he hunted Rocky Mountain bighorn, got a ram, and got bit by the wild sheep hunting bug. In 1981 he moved to Idaho for the hunting, fishing and skiing. During the spring of 1982 he harvested a wild turkey near Council. Later Burk found out he was one of only 93 turkey hunters that year and the Idaho turkey population was estimated at 350.

A few weeks later Burk met the Idaho Fish and Game Department Director Jerry Conley. They discovered that they both enjoyed turkey hunting. During the discussion Burk suggested restarting the turkey transplanting program that had been suspended some ten years earlier. To support the IDFG efforts Burk started the Gem State Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation. The program was successful, and Idaho now has 75,000 wild turkeys and 15,000 turkey hunters.

While Burk and Jerry were holding a turkey hunting seminar Jerry asked Burk to be one of the first Directors of the Citizens Against Poaching (CAP) organization. About that time Burk recognized a need for more emphasis on managing Idaho’s bighorn sheep. In 1983 Burk organized a group of six more fellow wild sheep hunters to raise money for Idaho bighorn sheep projects. They were Dr. Bob DeGrazia, Harold Eshelman, Roger Michener, Rick Dredge, Ron Morris, and Wayne Schwabrow. Charter membership was opened up and after about a year there were 27 Charter Members. That small group became the founders of the Idaho Chapter of the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (now Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation). Burk has since taken a Dall, a Stone, and a Fannin sheep.

After leaving the oil business in 2000 Burk started and sold small businesses until retiring in 2021. He remains active in hunting and fishing, especially enjoying chukar hunting with his bird dogs.

**Charter Member Highlight**

Burk Mantel
Thank you to the following sponsor’s

Don Colter
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Glenn Landrus
Dick Nachbar
Mike Schlegel
Total credit and thanks for my first moose hunt goes to my father, Scot Jenkins. Having hunted my entire life with brothers and father, I wanted to hunt moose with my father. Seeing him accumulate 23 preference points without yet drawing a moose tag in my home state of Wyoming, it became apparent that Alaska or Canada would be my best option for a moose hunt before old age would likely intervene. My father had already taken three species of moose but had not yet hunted eastern Canada moose. Research revealed that a two-on-one guided moose hunt on Newfoundland Island "might be our best opportunity. Moose had been introduced to that island in 1904 and population numbers had quickly expanded without predation from wolves or brown bears. By 1935 moose had spread over most of the island. Newfoundland now hosts possibly the highest moose density per square mile in North America and produces extremely high success rates at reasonable prices for guided hunts.

We sent our deposit in December 2021 for an early October 2022 hunt. Airline flights were paid for in February and we watched in horror during ensuing months as our itineraries were changed four times by our discount booking company and six different times by Airline carriers. Then as our departure date arrived, Hurricane Fiona roared up the East Coast and slammed into Newfoundland (NL) causing "Once-per-lifetime" destruction. While, in Montreal we watched the news as the coastal NL town of Port aux Basques was hammered by Fiona with 80 homes being destroyed. Some homes were battered loose from their foundations and swept into the sea. Air Canada cancelled our flight into Deer Lake, NL and delayed our arrival from Friday to Monday. We lost two hunting days on the front end of our adventure with return flights remaining essentially unchangeable. Undaunted, we had endured the struggle through the tedious ArriveCAN vaccination-required application process. We also navigated the insufferable Immigration and Customs goat-rope process of bringing firearms and ammunition into Canada. Finally, upon our delayed arrival in Deer Lake, NL, we were truly relieved and ready for the FUN to begin.

After our floatplane flight to base camp, we soon learned that our dreams of a "Remote Fly-in Hunt" were likely not going to live up to expectations. We saw and held two excellent moose racks that were leaving camp, taken by other hunters who were departing upon our arrival. We also learned that there were only two locations available to hunt from this camp due to terrain and vegetation limitations. The dense tuckamore tree jungles and swampy tundra conditions constrained us to just those two established separate vantage points for glassing. Each of these locations had been hunted hard annually over the decades, steadily since the founding of this camp in the 1960's. We observed several generations of existing cabins at the base camp site, with the newest cabin being very comfortable and newly constructed. Lodging and meals were first class. During our first hunting day, dad, myself and our guide glassed hard from sun up to sun down without seeing a single moose, or animal of any kind except birds. We did glass up numerous rib cages and bone piles along with surveyor tape marking pack out trails from prior kills. Also, present were empty brass casings at each prominent rock outcropping utilized for glassing. We sincerely hoped that the next day at the second and final glassing location would be more productive. On the next day of hunting, the morning hours were dragging on again, without the hoped-for moose sightings. As we glassed, we started to see a few brief glimpses of distant moose quickly moving into cover. While the morning wore on, the guide and I were glassing on one side of the ridge and my father motioned for us to join him on the other side. He had found a shooter bull over a mile distant and was taking video with his Swarovski spotter and Phone Skope focused upon the bull. We all kept our binoculars on that bull as he disappeared into thick brush for the day. We marked the bedding spot, descended to the lake, boarded our boat and motored to a location closer to our bedded bull. Departing the boat, we walked through sloppy wet and muddy conditions toward the thick brushy area where our bull was bedded. Thank heavens for knee high rubber

**Father-Son Newfoundland**

**Moose Adventure**

*By Seth Jenkins*
boots! As we approached the bedding location, our guide surprised us by pushing through the brush directly toward where we expected the bull to be bedded. With the wind correct and the rut in full swing, our guide was confident that his occasional cow calls would keep the bull interested and curious rather than running away. Suddenly, the bull stood, visible upon a ridge just 40 yards from us. I’ve always used bipods and been insistent upon a prone or stabilized shooting setup. That clearly wasn’t an option this time and I took my first offhand free-standing shot at a big game animal. My dad captured the entire shot sequence looking right over my shoulder for a crystal-clear video of a perfect one-shot kill. In Newfoundland they count all points on both sides of bull moose antlers to determine trophy quality. My 15-point bull was a solid mature bull and I was fortunate to take him.

Earlier in the hunt we had asked our guide if he would tell us when we saw a bull if it was average for the area, or below, or above average. All the guide would say is “if you like a bull, then shoot it”. He then added that if he personally had a tag and saw a trophy bull standing near a young bull, the biggest bull would walk free. Read what you will between those lines, both spoken and unspoken! Later, near the end of our hunt, my father shot a young bull. We ended up shooting the only two bulls seen during our entire hunt and the total moose spotted could almost be counted on the fingers of a single hand. Given all the challenges and unexpected surprises encountered during our Newfoundland adventure, we feel fortunate to have filled two tags. All things considered, however, we made some incredible memories and shared an amazing father-son experience. Thanks, Dad, for allowing me to shoot the good bull that you found for us. Adventures shared with loved ones are always the best!
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ANDREW ELAM andrewelam@postins.com
By Dr. John Greer

My story really starts in 2016. That year I was lucky enough to draw a Desert sheep tag in Nevada. Knowing this was more than likely a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, I booked a hunt with Jim Puryear of Nevada Guide Service. After a fantastic, successful hunt in Nevada, Jim said: “You really should think about going on a Stone sheep hunt with Reg Collingwood, you know it’s not going to get cheaper down the road!”

I came home from Nevada and casually mentioned Jim’s recommendation to my wife. She immediately encouraged me to look into a Stone sheep hunt, stating “If it’s something you want to do, do it!” One call with Reg and I booked a hunt for 2019.

Fast forward to 2019: I arrived in Smithers, British Columbia on September 11th. The next morning, we awoke at 4 a.m. and on the float plane. Things were a bit different at base camp than 2 years prior. In 2019, there were guides, cooks, and wranglers from all over the world including Germany, the Netherlands, Australia, and New Zealand. Many of these countries were still in complete lockdown from the pandemic at the time of my hunt. Hence, staffing of the operation and repair of equipment was challenging for the outfitter. Upon arrival I met my guide Jesse who is a farrier by trade. Previously I had hunted with a guide and a wrangler, this time it would be just Jesse and me.

We pieced together horses and tack for our expedition. The only reins we could find for my setup were roping reins which form a loop and are shorter than traditional reins. We weighted and balanced our loads for the horses, then rode back to the same spike camp I had hunted out of 2 years prior. We made it in 8½ hours this time by keeping up a continuous brisk pace. Roping reins are okay for a short ride, but they are difficult to use in the backcountry for really long rides.

Winter comes early in that country, and there was a fair amount of snow in the high country by mid-September. On our first day of real sheep hunting, we awoke at 4 a.m. We had a quick breakfast and got on our horses well before first light in a steady rain. As we climbed the rain transitioned to a rain/snow mix then to just snow as we reached treeline. We tied up our horses and immediately found evidence of a big horse wreck on the adjacent ridge. We found a saddle, a rusty rifle and luckily for me some reins! I have no idea what happened up there to the unfortunate hunter who lost his gun and his tack.

We brought back the gear to our horses and hiked into sheep country enduring 20-30 mph gusts of blowing snow. Despite covering plenty of territory and glassing several basins, we didn’t turn up any sheep the first day. We got back to the horses as darkness fell. We had to walk our horses out due to the steepness of the snow-covered trail. We arrived at our spike camp a few hours later. It was dinner and bed soon thereafter.

The next morning, we headed back up to treeline in the dark, then hiked into other high basins above treeline. Again, we didn’t see any sheep, but we did see goats, caribou and a few grizzlies. We once again got back to our horses and hiked into other steep trails, leading our horses. Jesse was well ahead and out of earshot when my own private rodeo started. My saddle was too loose on my horse and it slid under her as we slid in the mud down the trail. She was spooked and managed to step on my scabbard and rifle as I tried to take the saddle off of her. I heard a sickening crack as she stepped on it. I was sure my stock was cracked and my hunt was premature over as she ran off down the mountain leaving me in the mud and the snow. I’m such a greenhorn sometimes!

Jesse returned a bit later with my horse in tow. Upon inspection of my rifle, it had a lot more character, a shattered clip, but appeared to be functional. I had an extra clip, so I was still ready for action. The next morning, we rechecked my rifle and found it to still be sighted in. We spent the rest of that day hiking and glassing but once again failed to see any sheep.

The next morning, we were back up at 4 a.m. and on the trail well before daylight in a steady rain. We climbed up the familiar steep trails as the rain became snow as I clutched onto my horse’s mane to stay on him. We tied up the horses at treeline and hiked a few hours until we...
could drop into a protected basin. We crawled to the ledge overlooking the basin and immediately saw a small ram and 2 ewes just as they fed out of site. We eased forward until we could see the whole group of sheep. There was one mature ram in the group and 2 small rams with 5 ewes. It was obvious the big ram was well past full curl and an obvious shooter. When you see a ram like that you don’t have to think long about whether or not to try and take him.

Jesse ranged the group and said, “How far can you shoot?” I said, “I’m real comfortable out to 400, but I can shoot out to 600 if I have to in these conditions.” Jesse said, “Good! They are 570 yds correcting for the downhill so you should be fine.”

I had plenty of time as they were grazing undisturbed on the opposite side of the drainage, but at a much lower elevation than we were. There was no chance to get closer as the terrain was wide open slate scree. I set up my bipod and got a good rest for my stock. Jesse was set up with his spotting scope to call the shot. When the big ram turned broadside, I fired the first shot from my 6.5 Creedmoor, and Jesse said, “You hit him in the front shoulder, shoot again!” With my next shot Jesse said, “You hit him, but I’m not sure where and he is still up so keep on shooting!” My third shot went over his back and on my fourth shoot I anchored him for good.

After the obligatory yelling and high fives, we made our way over to the ram. He was indeed a beautiful ram. I had finally harvested a stone, and a beautiful one at that. Upon inspection of him, I had indeed broken his front shoulder with my first shot, and my second and fourth shots were double lung shots.

We then took time to savor the moment, before taking pictures and breaking down the animal. The wild places that sheep inhabit are indeed beautiful places and good for the soul; backcountry British Columbia couldn’t be a finer example of that.

The pack-out was tough, but we got back to our horses by dark and back to camp a few hours later. The next day we broke camp and made the familiar 9 ½ hour ride back to Bug Lake. The trip home seemed easier and better though, as I could see my ram riding atop the pack horse in front of me this time.

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By Don Colter, Idaho WSF Treasurer

We are off to an amazing start and looking forward to the future of wild sheep conservation. The Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation Endowment was successfully kicked off at the 2022 annual banquet, with over $100,000 being raised.

The bylaws and investment policy have been adopted by the Board of Trustees. The bylaws and investment policy will be available on the Idaho Wild Sheep Foundation website, https://www.idahowildsheep.org.

Building a lasting foundation for wild sheep conservation takes a lot of support. We encourage you all to "Be Part of the Legacy" and broaden your impact in the effort to put and keep wild sheep on the mountain for future generations.

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I
which meant an early departure the next morning. Tim and Hilton at 4 am and took naps. Eldar was the contact person the capital of Tajikistan, where we checked into a lovely It was Thanksgiving Day back home as we ran through the huge bazaar, and a rug shop, where I was surprised to interesting day touring Istanbul, including several mosques, boarded a flight from Missoula, Montana on November 21, 2021, destined for Dallas and then Istanbul. I met up with Tim, Scott and Mike, my hunting partners, and we spent an interesting day touring Istanbul, including several mosques, the Hunting Consortium, an agency with a good reputa

But this trip surely would be better. My companions made that likely; three fellow hunters, nice chaps from Texas and Maryland, and the hunt was booked through Bob Kern and

Maryland, and the hunt was booked through Bob Kern and the Hunting Consortium, an agency with a good reputa
tion. We did have to delay a year due to Covid, but I finally boarded a flight from Missoula, Montana on November 21, 2021, destined for Dallas and then Istanbul. I met up with Tim, Scott and Mike, my hunting partners, and we spent an interesting day touring Istanbul, including several mosques, the huge bazaar, and a rug shop, where I was surprised to see some of my sheep paintings turned into a fine wall hang

...the concept of copyright infringement was lost on the owner.

It was Thanksgiving Day back home as we ran through the cavernous Istanbul airport to catch our flight to Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, where we checked into a lovely Hilton at 4 am and took naps. Eldar was the contact person for hunters arriving, and he made sure we were on schedule, which meant an early departure the next morning. Tim and

I rode in one car with our luggage and guns, and a very qui
et driver who spoke no English, which was a tad disappoint

ing, as I had so many questions as we drove. I knew the road we were traveling traced the Afghanistan border, formed by the Panj river, and I started wide-eyed out the windows for hours, soaking up the rugged landscape, numerous small villages, livestock, and herders. The road was partly paved, then became a dirt track, rugged and scarred with ravines and loose rock, and we encountered many huge Chinese tractor trailers bringing goods in from China or returning empty to the border on the east. After eleven hours, we finally rolled into the town of Khorg, where there was some sort of civil unrest going on, with tires burning in the streets, and trees chopped down to block the main road; menacing hooded figures strode right up to our car. Yikes. It turned out to be a training exercise of some sort. We could not drive any further due to the road blockages, so we carried our luggage to two hidden trucks and continued to our hotel.

Up at 6 am for the last push to the hunting camp, and this time we had an interpreter, Nurlen, in our car, who spoke good English and answered my many questions about the land and the people we were passing. After seven hours we arrived at the famous Murgab Hot Springs camp, and boy, was this an improvement over the Balenlik camp I had stayed at almost 20 years earlier. Twin beds, shower, toilet, electricity, all toasty warm due to the geothermal springs beneath the camp. We got settled in our rooms, sighted electricity, all toasty warm due to the geothermal springs beneath the camp. We got settled in our rooms, sighted

up to the scree slope. It was almost dark, and they were very
calming, looking down at us from about 400 yards. I got prone and had the biggest ram in my sights, but he would not stand clear; they bunched up and wouldn't move. We danced around, bowled like wolves, and eventually they started straight up in a line, like they do. When he finally stood clear, I took the shot, and was told it was over again!!! Shooting over animals is not something I have done before. I was dialing the distance I was told, but I'm not sure there was any compensation for the angle with the range I was given. As it was now dark, we drove the 1½ hours back to camp, and I congratulated Tim for his great trophy ram he shot that day, an old patriarch, just like he wanted. My own confidence was badly shaken by the misses; dark in case they needed it and started back down. It took me 45 minutes to reach the truck, Rashid walked up to me, then the radio went off; they had found the ram! I screamed to the heavens in relief, then burst into tears, poor Rashid doing his best to comfort me.

It was almost dark as we started up the mountain in the truck to get as close as we could to the men and the ram. It took us over an hour to make any progress; finally, Rashid parked the truck, motioned for me to wait, and took off in the dark on foot to help. I sat in the cold truck, feeling drained, somber, exhilarated and grateful, all at once. They

just fine; lots of tea, cheese, sausage, nuts, fruit, and lovely main courses of soup, meat, and potatoes. The elevation of the camp was 14,500', and as I was taking Diamox, I had no issues with the elevation. Most days started out at -26C. Luckily, every day was sunny; with very little wind, perfect for our hunt.

Each of us had our own vehicle, 2 guides and a driver, and we left early, starting a long day of driving, glassing, and searching for sheep and ibex. My driver, Rashid, did not speak English, but my guides Imom and Shodi did. Shodi had amazing vision and often saw sheep that were miles away on a hillside. He would then hop out and set up his scope to check things out, and if rams were present, we would try to drive a little closer and come up with a plan. In the afternoon we followed a small bunch of rams halfway up a mountain, and I jumped out to try to get a shot as they filed up a draw. Shodi ranged them at around 700 yards. I shot, and he said I shot over it…? We raced down the moun
tain and around it, where we found them again on a scree slope. It was almost dark, and they were very
calm, looking down at us from about 400 yards. I got prone and had the biggest ram in my sights, but he would not stand clear; they bunched up and wouldn’t move. We danced around, bowled like wolves, and eventually they started straight up in a line, like they do. When he finally stood clear, I took the shot, and was told it was over again!!! Shooting over animals is not something I have done before. I was dialing the distance I was told, but I’m not sure there was any compensation for the angle with the range I was given. As it was now dark, we drove the 1½ hours back to camp, and I congratulated Tim for his great trophy ram he shot that day, an old patriarch, just like he wanted. My own confidence was badly shaken by the misses;
were back at the truck in less than an hour, dragging this enormous, gorgeous ram. Since it was very late, they stuffed him into the back and we started down, finally arriving around 8 pm.

Once back to camp, everyone gathered in the skinning room to admire the ram, who did indeed measure a touch over 60”, the holy grail of sheep trophies. Talk about a team effort; those boys all earned their tips, to be sure.

The next morning we took my ram up the hill behind camp for photos, and then the skinner got to work, placing the skull plate into a neat hot spring bath. I spent that day playing with their big alabai herding dog and exploring around the camp. By the end of that day, all three of us had gotten terrific Marco Polos and the boys each had a lovely ibex as well. They decided to leave for Dushanbe the next morning; I could have stayed for a few more days to search for a snow leopard to photograph, as they were common in the area. But off we went, a 14 hour drive on that nasty road, a night in a hotel, and back to the Hilton by 3 pm the next day.

We then spent four days in Dushanbe, awaiting our flights home, and did some sightseeing and shopping. I found Tajikistan a much more favorable destination this time and would not hesitate to return.
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and for Collars

for Pronghorns

and Pachyderms

Formerly the last, best place, Idaho has been discovered. An endless influx of new residents has escalated real estate prices, produced new subdivisions in the hills around every town and resulted in the construction of trophy homes in formerly rural settings. Not-so-green wind and solar farms are consuming thousands of acres of wildlife habitat to energize all that new building. Wildlife managers cannot dictate what happens to wildlife habitat, but are now emphasizing the protection of migration corridors between protect-ed areas as a means to conserve game and Game has a statewide action plan to map the migrations and is working in the winter foothills. Migrations often cross private ground that is now in inaccessible real estate areas as a means to conserve game species in the face of the onslaught. We know that if elk, deer and pronghorn cannot move from summer range to winter range we will lose them. Sheep migrations are shorter, but they need access to the wind-blown meadows of the winter foothills. Migrations often cross private ground that is now at in-creased risk of development. Idaho Fish and Game has a statewide action plan to map the migrations and is working in collaboration with federal land managers. Pronghorn migrations especially have been little studied until now and many prairie goats have been collared in Idaho for this purpose, because some populations are in decline.

The loss of migration corridors is not a uniquely American problem. We like to think of Africa as an undeveloped wildlife paradise, but southern Africa has been settled for longer than the American west. Its human population is exploding. Its poor governments are struggling with balancing the needs of poverty-stricken citizens with a globally important wildlife heritage. They do so under pressure from anti-hunters in the first-world countries. The fate of ele-phants in Zimbabwe is a case in point.

I recently traveled to Zimbabwe’s Chi-zarira National Park to meet Norman Monks, Executive Director of the Afri-can Lion and Environmental Research Trust (ALERT). Chizarira is 2000 km² of wilderness located in an extremely remote area south of Lake Kariba on the Zambezi escarpment. Chizarira is not a park like Yellowstone. It has no infrastructure, no maintained roads, no lodges or hotels and virtually no visitors. When I stayed in Norman’s camp there was only one other party in the entire national park. That seems ideal for elephants and other wildlife, but Chizarira also generates no income. Most African parks are subsidized by adjacent hunting concessions, which also add significant acreage to protected habitat. The hunting concessions of the Save Valley are at Chizarira’s south-east border, but elsewhere villages are popping up like mushrooms and rural Africans see elephants and other wildlife as threats to livelihood and even lives. About 500 people are killed by elephants in Africa every year.

The growing human population is isolating Chizarira/Save and Norman’s goal is to identify the corridors needed to link it with other protected areas. He had previously shown that lions were moving through the villages to Hwange National Park, a distance of 100 miles, as the crow flies. He is interested in elephant movements too and I was under pressure from anti-hunters in the first-world countries. The fate of ele-phants in Zimbabwe is a case in point. We let them go (like we had a choice), but we were out again that afternoon looking for the same group. One of its members was a mature bull with maybe 30-pound tusks that Norman wanted. He guessed its age at about 40-50 years. As we crawled along a rutted two-track one of the younger game guards rapped on the roof of the cab and told us he had had a feeling that the elephants were nearby. Thinking we were just humoring him we let him climb a tree and he spotted them. It’s inexplicable, but weird things like that happen in Africa all the time. Minutes later, we were walking through tall grass towering over our heads, as we descend-ed a slope toward a nearly dry river. We hopped across the pools and the mud from rock to rock and I comforted myself by thinking that it didn’t seem like a place that would hold big crocodiles. We climbed the far bank, ascending briskly through more tall grass and soon we were in the middle of a herd: cows and calves and one more bull, crowded around their fallen comrade. Norman bravely stepped forward and waved his comrade. Norman bravely stepped forward and waved his

The other elephants did not react at all. Perhaps they thought they heard a branch break. That’s a common sound in a group of elephants. Unchecked ele-phant numbers turn forests into deserts. After five minutes we heard the crash of the bull tpping over and the rest of the herd: cows and calves and one more bull, crowded around their fallen comrade. Norman bravely stepped forward and waved his eye wide, flapped his ears and took a few steps forward. Apparently assum-ing that he had been bitten by a really ambitious bug, he simply closed his eyes again and drifted off.

We blew our first attempt. Creeping within about 50 yards of a group of 20 that were foraging on whole trees, we were entertained by two tuskers pushing each other face to face. There were bulls, cows and calves and there was much cracking and breaking of branches. One tuskless cow was unusually alert and she kept peering our way while we hid in the tall, yellow grass. We crept in still closer, Norman with his dart gun and two game guards: one with an SKS and the other with an AK47. I was uncomfort-ably defenseless. It’s amazing how puny a man can feel without his .416. It was getting warm and the morning breeze was swirling, but Norman didn’t dare move while that cow was staring. She knew something was up. Then, the inevitable happened. I felt a sudden puff on the back of my neck and the elephants were all in motion, hurrying away along a gen-tle side-hill. Elephants don’t really run, but they can shuffle very quickly. It’s like how our elk cover so much ground when they just seem to be trotting. We chased after the shuffling jumbos but they rapidly closed the gap. Some big, gray shapes were partially visible at about 50 yards. This time we let Norman make the final approach alone. The bull was standing asleep. His backside was toward us and he was a bit separated from the main group. From about 20 yards Norman took the shot and we heard the report, followed immediately by the sound of the charge injecting the drugs into a big, gray buttck. The bull opened his eyes wide, flapped his ears and took a few steps forward. Apparently assum-ing that he had been bitten by a really ambitious bug, he simply closed his eyes again and drifted off.

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We removed the dart from the sleeping giant and treated the wound and applied ointment to protect his eyes from the African sun. Great gurgling snores and deep sighs emanated from the end of his trunk. We worked quickly to minimize the effects of difficult breathing or overheating and we poured water over the bull’s ears; the giant heat exchangers that keep big bodies cool in the hot sun. The collar was fitted and trimmed to size. It was a collar so big that a lead brick was used as a counter-weight to keep the electronics on top. After the reversal was administered into a big vein in his ear we hid in the bushes nearby to watch the show. In minutes, he was rocking on his side and it only took three attempts before he was on his feet, probably wondering what had happened and where everybody was. He urinated about 55 gallons and then disappeared into the trees.

The western world has been convinced by animal rights advertising that African elephants are threatened with extinction and our anti-hunting media outlets propagate this false story. Africans know better. Current population estimates for the continent are between 400,000 and a half-million. There are an estimated 100,000 elephants in Zimbabwe alone. Zimbabwe’s population is more than double the carrying capacity of its protected areas and it is growing at a rate of 5–8% per year. Unchecked elephant numbers destroy habitat for themselves and all the other species. The result can be seen in many African parks, which are losing their biodiversity because of elephants.

Norman is conducting baseline vegetation surveys at Chizarira because Zimbabwe is planning to live-trap and move elephants to the park from locations where there are too many before they can do permanent damage to those other protected areas. It’s obviously a temporary solution. They will eventually outgrow Chizarira too. Zimbabwe does hunt elephants but only about 300 a year are taken, in part due to how difficult the USA makes it to import the trophies and because some anti-hunters are just crazy enough that it’s just safer these days not to hunt elephants. But southern Africa needs more elephant hunting to save its elephants and much of its other wildlife. Some places have been so crowded for so long that a cull is needed to recover them. But these solutions are unlikely to be implemented because of American and European opposition. Identifying corridors could help by improving the island habitats but the elephants will eventually fill up those areas too. And just like here in Idaho, merely identifying corridors doesn’t automatically mean they will be protected. It is only the necessary first step. Ultimately we must get serious about managing elephants in balance with their remaining habitat, which means numbers will have to be reduced. This will require more enlightened policy from a western world blinded by anti-hunting mythology. Wildlife conservation is not about saving the lives of individual animals. It is about conserving whole populations.
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On September 15th, 2022, I embarked on my third Rocky Mountain Bighorn hunt in Canada as my two previous hunts for Rockys had been unsuccessful. This was the last sheep I needed to complete my FNAWS. I was hunting with outfitter Chad Lenz's Savage Encounters of Alberta. It was a 14 day backpack hunt.

Day one was uneventful not seeing any sheep. Day two we packed up camp and moved further up the valley to our second camp. We saw a couple of ewes but no Rams. Day three we moved camp further up the valley, so we were about 12 miles in at this point.

After setting camp we went scouting, soon my guide Matt spotted a very mature 12+ year old across the valley. It was about 1:00 pm and we decided to go make a move on him. We came down one side of the valley and proceeded up the drainage. The last several hundred yards we had to crawl in our hands and knees to stay hidden. The crawl got us at 640 yards from the ram, but we couldn't get any closer as there was no more cover. I set up and waited for him to stand which took probably 30 minutes. At about 5:30 pm he finally stood and gave me a broadside shot. I knew there was wind, so I compensated for it hitting him in the neck. He crumpled in place and slid around 20 yards then didn't move again. I can't tell you how excited I was to finally complete my FNAWS.

Thanks again to Matt my guide and Savage Bighorn Encounters, www.SavageEncounters.com

By Craig Mueller
Submit to:
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